

Femme Fatales

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Spring 1994

Volume 3 Number 1

REBECCA FERRATTI

The "Ace Ventura" Vixen in
Her Horror & Fantasy Roles

MARTIN D'ABO
MELANIE SHAINER
PHYLLIS DAVIS
DEBBIE ROCHON

DENISE DUFF, FULL MOON'S SEXY VAMPIRE



Femme Fatales

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VOLUME 2 NUMBER 4

"The Luscious Ladies of Horror, Fantasy & Science Fiction"

SPRING 1994

So, you are reading the editorials, huh? Good. I'm glad you're paying attention. Bill George told me I could rent the ingredients from a Cheesecake box and no one would notice. I'm relieved he's taking a nice, long rest at Rick and Monica's, it'll do wonders for his perspective. (Don't worry, Bill, I've got everything under control!) His absence proved an open invitation for yours truly to slip my alter ego, Sam (a.k.a. Mad Maxie), into our pages (see 42).

Sam embodies the bolder desires that will navigate *Femme Fatales* in an even more constructive direction. You see, I've recently been challenged to put my money where my mouth is. Nancy Spitzer, who interviewed me for a very balanced L.A. Times article on this magazine, confronted yours truly on hypocrisy: pro-woman copy versus exploitative pictures. Priority she's right. While an actress may lament the delicacy of women's roles, she may have no qualms about being photographed in the buff to promote *BABETTES FROM HELL, PART III*. I don't know about you, but I'm adhering to last issue's definition of a femme fatale: women of strength, independence and power. We're eager to profile anyone who qualifies in this capacity, not only actresses, but all women in the industry—producers, directors, writers—who bust but in their efforts to make a significant difference. Don't hesitate to write me about the visionary ladies whom we should address as the unrecognized femme fatales.

Hey, thanks for your support. Sales of *Femme Fatales* are better than ever, prompting us to tackle a bi-monthly schedule. In fact, this issue was supposed to debut as our first bi-monthly, but a certain boyfriend didn't make the deadline. Don't worry, I've sailed him to New Zealand for a matchbook course on expedient editing. Expect our next issue in two months.

My pet project, Lea Hornsby Fatales, won't premiere until I find the perfect centerfold. In the event I can't engage a suitably hot, new talent, publisher Fred Clarke will have to suffice. Wonder if I can talk him into wearing the trademark CFO G-string with the Starship Enterprise embroidery?

Debbie Rochon



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LETTERS

FEMFORCE

AC Comics has received several copies of your Fall issue (2-2) from various fans due to the article on Julie Michaels. Julie is set to play the role of the superheroine, RAYDA, in a film based on our title, FEMFORCE. The concept of an all female super hero team is unique to comic books. Although AC Comics has published the FEMFORCE title for ten years, it is just now getting media attention due to the strength of women in the films of the '90s. Believing the concept to be right for today's film and television market, independent film producer Mike Frankovich, Jr. approached us to see if we were interested in pursuing this avenue of the entertainment field. Indeed we are!

The Film Company and AC Comics have turned down funding for the project from several sources who insisted on an R-rated film. They seemed to feel women could not carry a film without nudity, sex and violence to support them. We consider this philosophy to be outdated. We are looking to produce a film with lots of super heroic action and beautiful females who present an image of the woman as a leader and role model. We truly believe today's audience is willing to

let women be beautiful and action oriented without being bimboes...times are changing.

Julie Michaels (RAYDA), Sharon Blair (SYNN) and Dori Lann (SHE-CAT) have been selected to play roles in FEMFORCE team members. These actresses represent the action-oriented female in the finest light. Because of their commitment to a project that presents women in new and positive action roles, these actresses have represented AC Comics in a number of public appearances. Thanks for the fine article on Julie, one of the new breed of female action heroes...beauty and physical ability rolled into one...we think she's the greatest!

Rebekah Black, President
AC Comics
Longwood, Florida

GUILTY PLEASURE

I received the first and subsequent issues of FF, and thought them to be very entertaining. I am a freelance translator, doing mostly genre books, and am a great fan of horror and film. These B-films are, I confess, a guilty pleasure (granted, now and then, they are better than the so-called "A" films).

I particularly liked the interviews with Traci Lords (1-4) and Ginger Lynn Allen (2-1). THE TOMMYKNOCKERS, Lords' American TV movie, was released on video in Germany sometime in August or September '93. While the film was an exercise in boredom, Lords' acting was quite good. INTENT TO KILL surprised me, because she convincingly played a vigilante cop. Maybe she is an actress after all...

Not all of Ginger Lynn Allen's B-films are released on (German) video, but I had the misfortune to see MIND, BODY AND SOUL, which was translated in the German edition under the really inspired title, BLOOD TRAIL OF SATAN. I rented it because I'm not only a horror fan, but a fan of Wings Hauser. It was the worst movie I have ever seen and, believe me, I have seen most

of them. Compared to Lords, Lynn Allen's film career is going nowhere which is sad.

How about articles on Christina Applegate, Ami Dolenz, Teri Weigel, and more Julie Strain?

Andreas Decker
Wuppertal, Germany

(Thanks, Andreas. This issue offers a double dose of Julie Strain, check-out the behind-the-scenes coverage of BLONDE HEAVEN and TEMPTRESS. Ginger Lynn Allen was recently visible on prime time TV, via her guest appearance on ABC's NYPD BLUE.)

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

I zeroed in on the "Fetale Attractions" paragraph pertaining to a possible Vampirella movie. My choice to play Vampirella is Joan Severance. Like Vampy, Joan is a tall, dark-haired beauty with mesmerizing eyes. Also, based on what I've seen in her videos, she would have little trouble filling out Vampy's costume. I also think that Yancy Butler, formerly of the ill-fated MANN AND MACHINE television series, would be another good choice. Reading between the lines in this and earlier FF editions, however, I suspect that Toni Naples is the front runner for the part. [VAMPIRELLA producer] Jim Wynorski cannot seem to say enough good things about her.

Let me run an idea past you. Modern day special effects are fueling a comeback in what I call "now you see 'em, now you don't" films. For example, Francis Ford Coppola will apparently do a remake of *The Invisible Man*, Full Moon will soon release a video titled INVISIBLE, and George R.R. Martin is allegedly working on a screenplay called FADE-OUT. It is quite common these days to see women playing vampires, werewolves, zombies, demons, and aliens. Yet, no one has come up with the idea of doing a horror or sci-fi adventure story about an invisible woman.

Many of the women featured in your magazine say

they are searching for roles that are challenging and don't require them to play a bimbo, victim or damsel-in-distress. I wonder how some of the profiled actresses would feel about either of the following—Playing a female descendant of Jack Griffin, who comes across his invisibility formula and uses it with the same tragic consequences. Or perhaps a woman rendered invisible in a freak accident who struggles to cope with her condition until the police ask her for help to thwart a gang of terrorists. Personally, I think Brooke Shields would be a natural in the former while Sara Suzanne Brown would fare well in the latter. Clyde Decker could play the terrorist leader! Either of the roles outlined seems to fit the actresses' criteria.

Carl Thomas
Alexandria, Virginia

FAN CLUBS

Ria Coyne: Her curves and comedy have prompted audiences to stay UP ALL NIGHT (FF 2-3). Coyne will provide fans with photos and news on CANDY CRACKER, P.I., her Betty Boop hegle who will soon debut on video. Send an s.s.s.e. to 10927 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 127, Los Angeles, California 90025.

Aline Kananian: It all started with her role in THE VAMPIRE CONSPIRACY (FF 2-3). After completion of the film, Kananian's career blossomed; check-out this issue's "Fetale Attractions" for an update. An s.s.s.e. will deliver info regarding autographed photos, et al. 11716 Barrington Court, #214, Los Angeles, California 90048.

Debbie Rochon: Our editrix, and this issue's cover woman, is offering not only autographed photos but a newsletter that documents her European work and the exploits of Rochon's alter ego, Sam (aka Mad Max). Send a s.s.s.e. to 461 West 48th Street, Suite 385, New York City, New York 10019.

Julie Michaels (FF 2-3) as Rayda. Mike Frankovich, FEMFORCE's movie producer, designed the costume.



F A T A L E

Remember Pamela Grier, star of those '70s women-in-prison and black exploitation movies (THE BIG BIRD CAGE, FOXY BROWN, SHEBA BIRD, SCREAM, BLACULA SCREAM, et al.)? Last year, FF caught up with Grier at the Cascazo Theatre company in New Brunswick, N.J. The actress was drawing in audiences for the November-December engagement of TELLTALE HEARTS. While very courteous, Grier declined to talk about her movies.

Another drive-in diva, June Wilkinson, is also performing on the boards. We caught up with the actress during rehearsals at a Canadian theatre. Wilkinson, among the blondes of the '60s who were promoted as "the next Marilyn Monroe," starred in exploitation movies that sparked controversy. Her horror film, MACCUBA LOVE (1969), was frowned by the Legion of Decency. The following year's PRIVATE LIFE OF ADAM AND EVE matched Wilkinson with another Monroe wannabe, Marlene Van Dorn. The cast also included Mel Torme. Tuesday Weld and co-director Mickey Rooney as the Devil Church groups denounced the brevity of the costumes, and branded the film as blasphemous. Unlike Ms. Grier, Wilkinson was quite candid about her film career. Check out a future issue of FF for her very frank recollections.

Want a first printt hardcover copy of Vivian Schilling's book, Sacred Prey? Good luck! The supernatural yarn, distributed by Triumf Press (Sherman Oaks, California), has passed the transitional point into a second printing. The actress/writer is wrapping post-production on her role in SAVAGE LAND.

Alan Spencer is currently producing GALAXY BEAT, a sitcom that spoofs the production of



Her fiery breasts dropped bed guys. But today's Pamela Grier declines to comment on her films.

science fiction shows. Cast includes Tracy Scoggins (FF 2-3) and Gregory Harrison. In the event that CBS approves the series for its fall schedule, Scoggins will still moonlight on LOS ANGELES, Spencer, incidentally, created the classic SLEDGEHAMMER series and helmed last year's HEXED, the black comedy starring BABYLON V's Claudia Christian.

Writer/director Delbert Wilkins is the founder of the Frank-N-Stein Bar & Grill, "a restaurant that serves as a historical overview of horror and science fiction films." Wilkins, negotiating for a Burbank location, intends to "decorate

the facilities with classic posters and authentic film props. The more graphic stuff—things from TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and a likeness of Linda Blair, hanging from the ceiling in a re-creation of THE EXORCIST—will be limited to the bar area. Life-size wax figures will be sculpted by Henry Alvarez, whose work has surfaced in THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK, THE THING, and all three ROBOCOP movies." Brinke Stevens has been brought in as a spokeswoman, sort of an Elvira-type mascot. Fans who would like an illustrated brochure should send an SASE to: Wolf's Head Productions, 1540 West Gaylord, Long Beach, Calif. 90813-1233.

Antonia Dorian (DINOSAUR ISLAND) is starring in JIM WYNORSKI'S EXOTICA, scheduled for production in May. No word yet, or when she will be producing/directing the erotic thriller.

Two companies (L.A. and N.Y.) have been competing for a script tied-in with Femme Fatales magazine. Well, a winner has almost been declared and production may start no later than October. More next issue.

Canadian filmmakers are preparing to shoot SACRED TRUST, a martial arts thriller which embodies the age-old struggle between good and evil. The producers are inviting readers to elect their favorite femme fatale to star in a leading portrayal. The uncast role: Lisa Evans, a 20-to-30ish beautiful blonde who is stylish and kind. She is a millionaire's daughter and serves as the love interest in our movie. So, what are you waiting for? Cast your vote! Write to: Sacred Trust, Producing Partners Film, P.O. Box 23154, London, Canada N6A 5H5.

Amazons Queen is on the drawing boards, a comic book illustrated with art renderings of B-Queens. Artist Robert Henry is developing characters for Melissa Mosie, Ann Casell, Debra Lamb, Monique Gabrielle and former porn star Dominique Simone. Tentatively scheduled to join the project: Michelle Bauer, Brinke Stevens and Ricky LeBeau. FF editor Debbie Rochon, originally linked to the comic book, has decided to drop out.

Edie Rochon did agree to serve as head writer for a special all-female edition of L'Ecran Fantastique, France's most popular game publication. In addition to her own



Serving as spokeswoman for Frank-N-Stein Bar & Grill, currently in development, Brinke Stevens offers some refreshment.

autobiographical profile. Rochon wrote three articles for the issue, which is scheduled to debut this summer. Contents also include Bill George's 1988 interview with Kathleen Kinmont, Brinke Stevens' interview with Monique Gabrielle, and a Debra Lamb profile. There's also homage to FF, with reproductions of our front covers (from 1-1 to current) illustrating a portion of the French magazine. Note: Sam (aka Med Massel), Rochon's front cover creation, will be making some personal appearances at the Diamond Comic Show. The big event is conveniently set in FF territory: The Baltimore Convention Center, June 10-14. Rochon will also appear, as herself, at the Winter installment (January '90) of the Fangoria convention. Edie Denier, last issue's front cover woman, is currently shooting a suspense thriller titled PERFECT ALIBI. The actress plays a French au pair who has an affair with a married man. Balance of the cast includes Tim Gort, Kathleen Quinlan, Hector Elizondo and Charles Martin Smith. After concluding her role, Denier will relax in Florida and determine which of two scripts will serve as her next project.

After serving as associate producer of DEADLY RUN, which integrates elements of real life serial murders and The Most Dangerous Game, Donald Farmer is launching his seventh film as producer/director. He describes RED LIPS, scheduled for a May shoot in New York, as an erotic shocker about a couple of women who are not your average, lesbian vampire hookers. The cast includes Michelle Bauer (FF 1-1), Ghity Chason and Russ Meyer icon, Francesca "Kitten" Nivard. Farmer's previous films include CANNIBAL HOOKERS (don't recall their being hookers), VAMPIRE COP and SCREAM DREAM.

Michelle Bauer, featured in this issue's

A blast from the past: Nightmare sisters' Christine Lonsdale, Linnea Guldberg and Michelle Bauer are reunited for PARTY BEGGERS II.





Look for it at a theatre near you—Montique Gabrielle & manager Tony Angove meet Hugh Hefner. The trio assuage a cake baked by a fan. The icing replicates Gabrielle's FF front cover [28].

BLONDE HEAVEN article, is one of the most active of the B Queens. She recently wrapped **ASSAULT OF THE PARTY NERDS II: THE HEAVY PETTING DETECTIVE**, a sequel to Richard Gabai's 1989 comedy. Bauer and Linda Gagliardi reprise their roles as Muffin and Bambi, with Rhonda Shear (FF 2.3) adding support as Tina, Muffin's best friend. Gabai, doubling as director and leading player, also portrayed Arty Johnson and Earl Ward to come aboard. The film has been described as a true sequel, opening exactly five years after the conclusion of the original. "It's sort of like **GODFATHER II**," explains Gabai, "but without the flashbacks." The end title song, performed by Tami McClure (**BURN! DRIVE IN!**), will be included on a soundtrack CD entirely devoted to original songs from all of Gabai's movies. **elusa Cornshaw**, featured in last issue's "Femmes Fever" pictorial, appeared in the action-thriller **SCANNER COP**. Apparently, producers of the image release were impressed; Cornshaw has been cast in the sequel, **SCANNER COP II**. Playing a different character this time around, Cornshaw is really hot in a pyrotechnical scene devised by effects expert, John Beuchler. Directed by Steve Barnett (**MISSION OF JUSTICE**), the cast includes Kristyine Hae (TV's **HEAD OF THE CLASS**) and Danny Quinn. Cornshaw recently wrapped a Western titled **BAD DAY AT DREAMY WATER** and **OBSESSION II: THE BEGINNING**, the latter an erotic thriller directed by Peter Maris (**DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY**). Co-starring with Sam Jones, the actress plays the new occupant of a house who is unlighted to the deadly secret shared by its caretakers. **OBSESSION II** will shoot later this year, but you can catch Cornshaw in the video debut of **PIZZA GIRLS**, scheduled for this summer.

■ The annual **Aspen Film Market**, officiated last February at Loren's Santa Monica Beach Hotel, was populated by a bevy of B-film celebrities. Actresses arrived to promote their latest product, and struggling starlets showed up to schmooze. Each day, the hotel lobby was infested with young hopefuls (conspicuous by their low-cut blouses) pouncing upon attendees wearing the AFM badge. These ingenuities

addressed their prospects with, "Hi, are you a producer?" Sounds cliché, but I swear it's true! Unfortunately, if attractive women attending the convention have been generally branded with the starlet stereotype. "If you're a pretty girl," notes actress Sara Suzanne Brown (FF 2.3), "and you go to the AFM, they tend to think you're a hooker."

■ Once night, March 21st, the Crippled Children's Society held a benefit at West Hollywood's Ma Maison, honoring Martin Landau and humanitarian/femme fatale Sally Kirdland. The hit of the evening, with guests and paparazzi alike, was actress/comedienne Rita Coyne, wearing a dress designed by Syren. After the benefit, Coyne revealed that FF L.A. Bureau Chief Ann Basso and photographer Glenn Campbell whisk her to the

Likely to be christened as a B-Queen for the '90s: Lisa Casanova's 1994 releases include **LUKAS**, **CHILD** (icing pie), **PIZZA GIRLS**, **SCANNER COP II**, **OBSESSION II**, etc.



party at Merloni's for a dose-by-schmoozing. It paid off. Coyne was snapped for *People* magazine's Oscar coverage.

■ Last issue, we offered a behind-the-scenes article on **THE VAMPIRE CONSPIRACY**. One of the film's stars, Aimee Kassman, has been very active in front of—and behind—the camera. "In regard to **VAMPIRE**, I secured the completion financing for delivery, as well as a foreign distribution deal," she explains. Kassman subsequently played supporting roles in **BOB'S NIGHT OUT**, a slapstick comedy, and **MADAM**, a melodrama about call girls, starring Joe Esteve. The actress also served as a leading player and co-producer of **SILK AND SABOTAGE** (formerly **HARD DRIVE**), a romantic comedy. Relaxing after her tenure as associate producer of **DEATHMATCH**, a martial arts thriller with Martin Kove, Kassman revealed she's "developing a couple of scripts that are closer to the 'A' range of production. One of them has been compared to **BLOOD SIMPLE**. I'll keep you posted."

■ Darcy Delloss, photographed for last issue's "Femmes Fever" pictorial, has been cast as the female lead in **STICKFIGHTER**. The actress portrays a fellow man who befriends hero-c Kid McCling. Directed by B.J. Davis, the film will be loaded with stunts, with the bad guys getting bludgeoned with sticks (courtesy of Mr. McCling, who has been groomed as the next Jean Claude Van Damme). After performing in 26 episodes of the Playboy Channel's **EDEN**, Delloss, is sticking to a wardrobe for this action opus. ■ Shelley Michelle (FF 2.3) recently premiered her first Pay-Per-View presentation. Christened "The world's first body double special," viewers were invited behind the scenes to sample Hollywood's best kept secrets. Michelle, who not only starred but served as executive producer and performed the soundtrack, cast the show through her agency, Body Doubles and Parts.

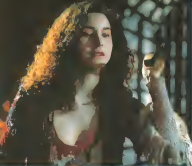
"It's documentary style, informative, sexy and erotic," she explains. "Producing it was also a learning experience. I had to be a lawyer, too!"

■ Set in a sleepy Texas roadhouse, Dan Golden's **SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL** is reminiscent of **THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE**. The cast includes country writer/singer Billy Burnette and B Queen Maria Ford (**THE HAUNTING OF MORELLA**, **THE UNNAMEABLE I**). The March 19th screening, held in Hollywood, would have probably been more of a hit with the patrons had the theatre been air-conditioned. After spending 26 minutes in sweltering heat, the swayed herd of attendees staggered out of the theatre and made their way to the (excellent) post-premiere party. So how hot was it? "At first," quipped Fred Olen Ray, "I thought the heat in there was a gimmick, so when it got hot in the movie, the theatre would also get hot." Wiping his brow, Ray looked for the water. "Oh boy, hurry up with that drink!"

■ Rella Karelsky, writer and director of the cult hit **THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE** (FF 1.8), is preparing the production of **HORMONES: THE MOVIE**. Julie Strain is tentatively scheduled to play—who else?—"Hormones" is the teenage alien, so I am speed. Newcomer Nicole Grey (**SWEET DREAMS**, **DEVIL IN THE FLESH**), scheduled for a profile in the next issue of FF, will play a pivotal role in **THE MOVIE**. □



Hollywood casts its young. In **LUCKY CHILD**, starlets audition for a B-horror flick. But, behind-the-scenes, the professor leads the pretty ingenues to a convoluted monster. Allegory or exploitation? Elizabeth Young and Lisa Starr play two of the hapfuls.



SUBSPECIES VAMP - DENICE DUFF



**FULL MOON'S FEMME FATALE
DISCUSSES VAMPIRE BEHAVIOR
AND SCREEN EROTICISM.**

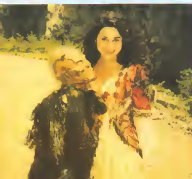
BY MARK A. ALTMAN

One sexist fossil, somehow denied interment, is the presumption that actresses are not rocket scientists. But Denice Duff has blown that platitude off the Hollywood map. An engineering major at UCLA for a year, the aspiring actress departed from the sunny shores of L.A. to finish her education in the Big Apple. "There was too much blonde hair and and turquoise T-shirts at UCLA and I needed out," laughs Duff. "I went to NYU and studied playwriting and directing. It's where I started being used in a lot of other directors' scenes, and I got a taste of the acting bug. It's always been there, I'd been doing shows for my family since I was four, but I suppressed it in myself because when you spend most of your time in Los Angeles, everyone thinks if you're cute and extroverted, you're an actress."

A veritable renaissance woman, Duff is not only a talented actress, but a painter, photographer and makeup artist. "Everything that deals with fashion fascinates me," she says. "To take a boring face and completely change it, create an attitude and an image that

can speak a million different emotions, is like magic to me." Although she plays both drama and percussion, Duff reluctantly admits that singing is not one of her many skills. "I'm not a great singer, I just sleep with musicians."

Reclining on the sofa of her bohemian apartment, surrounded by a variety of artifacts she has accumulated while crossing continents, Duff takes particular pride in pointing out her artwork and her special curio—an eroded accordion. Clad in an in oversized



"Photos on this page are from *SUBSPECIES II*," exclaims Duff. Top: "While I'm not good at drama, I'm a shoe-in with a two-foot, mystical dagger." Center: This is a snapshot taken of me while I was on a lunch break." Bottom: "It's me (dressing a rare smile for my character) and Munney under the Romanian sunshine."



"It's official," announces Duff. "This photo, and the picture on the left side of the next page, are my first cheesecake shots. So how did I do?" Duff was discovered by starmaker Jay Sornatkin. "We signed the contracts at the Polo Lounge," she smiles.



black T-shirt and denim jeans, she smiles infectious-ly while turning off the stereo that's blasting R.E.M. After spending four months in Bucharest, the 24-year-old actress is glad to be home. "I hit my cat with the phone when I found out I was going to Bucharest," she recalls. Serving as a replacement for Laura Tate, who portrayed Michelle in 1990's *SUBSPECIES*, Duff was cast in *PARTS II* and *III* of the trilogy. "I had read the script and am so Hollywood, I thought we'd be shooting on the backlot of Universal. I was completely clueless. Ironically, I ran into a guy from Paris, from which Bucharest is only a train ride away, and even he asked why I was going there. The hulk of Europe finds Romania to be a mystery."

But, having modeled across the globe, Duff didn't decline the opportunity to travel through uncharted territory. "Bucharest was a much brighter country than I thought, both physically and mentally. I expected gloom, because that's what comes to mind when you think of a former Communist country with no food or water, and you think the people are always depressed. But it just wasn't that way at all.

Duff made her film debut in *HILL COMES TO FRINGETOWN*, appearing with (l-r) Charles Napier, Lou Ferrigno and Robert Z'Dar.



"There are so many things a vampire has in common with today's issues; sexual obsession, murder and even homosexuality and drug addiction."

"We were taken care of very well. We always had a translator or some Romanian with us, who I tried to get away from so I could experience a little MIDNIGHT EXPRESS. The city, having Communism lifted off of it, was very strange spiritually. We photographed lots of cemeteries. They have a very sane viewpoint about death."

Describing the death of a Romanian citizen, Duff is visibly grieved. "I was driving with a translator to go shopping, and the car in front of us hit a man and killed him. I'd never seen someone die like that in front of me, and I freaked out. I just saw the body lying there and I was crying. My driver, who was about 20, put his hand on my knee and said, 'It's okay, he's tired. He can rest now.' He didn't have any long, philosophical explanation for it. So much of their way of thinking is very simple. The crew was entirely Romanian and there was a real sense of optimism. You see these wonderfully loving people, who are just aching for the art and music that had been completely suppressed for twenty years."

There were, however, reminders of the oppressive conditions that existed in the small European nation, including bullet holes in the satiated concrete buildings and orphaned, debilitated children roaming the streets. "I bought an accordion from a homeless boy on the street," says Duff, nodding at the shrouded musical instrument. "There are a lot of homeless children, and that was hard to deal with. I had such a great time shopping and spending my per diem, and we'd have stacks

of money and have a great time going to town and spending our money. Yet, on every corner, you'd see a 10-year-old girl without a leg or a 16-year-old girl with her three children. When I walk out on my doorstep now, and see hookers and drug dealers, it doesn't freak me out. I can look at it and survive."

Sobered by the experience, Duff returned to Hollywood and plunged into a round of auditions. The actress, a client of the prestigious William Morris agency, was discovered by manager Jay Bernstein, the starmaker who launched the careers of Farrah Fawcett and Linda Evans. Duff initially came to Bernstein's attention, while working as his receptionist, during a period when a "star search" contest was organized. "I kind of lucked out," shrugs Duff. "I went in as an intern to help serve coffee and make sure the bathrooms were filled with toilet paper, and that the actors had their nacho chips. One day, they needed an actress to read with someone. I went in and when I walked out, the judges said, 'Bring the intern back in.'"

At the encouragement of the judges, Duff auditioned for HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN II, the sequel to Dan Jackson's 1987 cult classic. "I had heard of the first one with Sandahl Bergman," says the brunette beauty. "It was so great because here's Jay Bernstein, this awesome starmaker, he recommended me. I wanted to do a good job, and be true to my art form, so he could get good feedback. I never dreamt I would get it, and never have to waitreess or



"If there's a nude scene," explains Duff, "it should be vulnerable and sensual and beautiful and artistic, which is what you always want...but rarely get."

sell flowers in nightclubs again. It was a five-week shoot, all filmed in a building on Hollywood Boulevard on two floors of soundstages. Jackson had a very interesting style of shooting. A lot of my dialogue was given to me as the camera was rolling. You would hear him say, 'Hurry, Commander, they've gone that way,' and then I'd say it and he'd keep going. Whenever he felt it was ready, he'd say 'Cut!' It was a dream come true. I had a perpetual hard-on—how else can I word that? I was the leading lady working with Charles Napier and Dan Stroud, and they were so helpful with

the technical parts of acting."

Bernstein signed the actress to a talent management contract. "He figured if I could go out in the real world and do so well, maybe he should represent me. I started doing guest-starring roles on shows like MATLOCK, REASONABLE DOUBTS, NORTHERN EXPOSURE and SILK STALKINGS. It was funny because I remember when I was interviewing, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great to have a really big agent and Jay Bernstein as my manager.' And, a month later, he was my manager and William Morris was my agent. You've en-

ly got a few decades of this career, and I have actress-friends who still don't have their SAG card. It just breaks my heart because there's so much work in this town. It's tough, but if you don't wake up in the morning and approach this career by going for the jugular, no one's going to care how brilliant you are."

And going for the jugular is literally the policy that lifted Duff from relative anonymity. Her role in *SUBSPECIES II*, as an American tourist who is reluctantly converted into a vampire by the pale, whining Radu and his less-than-maternal Mummy, has converted Duff into a cult figure. "The first few days I worked with Radu and Mummy, I had a real hard time playing the role seriously because they were these funny, little comic monsters, and they'd go out of their way with their characters. They'd twist up their faces and screech and cackle, but my character is grounded in reality. I just wanted to laugh, but if I went over the top I wouldn't be believable. I had to truly believe that this possibly could happen to a girl. After a while, it got weird to think I could have gone to Romania, been a student and am now growing fangs, but I knew I had a huge audience expecting me to pull this off."

"I researched vampires. There are so many things I think a vampire has in common with today's controversial issues: sexual obses-

"I think it's important for women to get into writing their own stuff. I've been looking at viewpoints and areas of life that strike a chord in me."



Duff converts to vampire in *SUBSPECIES II*. "Actually," she contradicts, "this is my impression of a salad bar, complete with my own sweets guard."

sion, murder and even homosexuality and drug addiction. I also read Anne Rice books and watched vampire movies like *NOSFERATU*, *DRACULA*, *NEAR DARK*, *FRIGHT NIGHT*, *WAR-HOL'S DRACULA* and even *BLACULA*. The one thing I really wanted to get as a vampire was to be able to withdraw from food and have nothing but liquids. It was a big joke with the other actors because I eat a lot, but I was trying to get into the character of a vampire

who has no sustenance except for blood and sex and I couldn't do that. I couldn't not have food."

Duff delivered the same manic enthusiasm and method approach at her audition. Reading for producer Charles Band, director Ted Nicolaou and the casting director, she smudged red lipstick on her victim to simulate blood. "I put it on the back of my neck. When I did the scene with the actor where I learned to bite him and draw back, I wiped the

'blood' onto my hand and it triggered a great emotion in everyone there."

The first day of shooting, they had to splatter blood on me. I got into it pretty quickly. I was a little shy, but I do have a huge tolerance for anything gross or obscene. If I see a cockroach, I'll get down and play with it rather than run from it. By the end of the film, I was doing a lot of my own blood and I would just grab the bottle and suck it down. My favorite scene is in *SUBSPECIES II*, where I seduce the rocker and vomit the blood. I wondered how that was going to play, but a lot of my friends have said that's their favorite scene. My character reacts to her first bite by feeling cold and shivering, and you can relate that to so many things—your first sexual experience, your first drug experience. I was pleased it actually did come off with a sense of reality to it, because you're dealing with such precarious things as blood and vomiting."

The actress wasn't spared the near-inevitable nudity, a requisite for an R-rated horror film. One scene required Duff to peel-off her bloody garments in her escape from Radu's castle. "I thought it was short but sweet," she smiles. "I wasn't a big fan of the nudity in *SUBSPECIES* because it was a little bit obvious. If there's a nude scene, I think you should be turned on by it, and it should be vulnerable and sensual and beauti-

Left: In *SUBSPECIES II*, I start up with the kind of Mummy who had trouble cutting the apron strings. Right: a behind-the-scenes shot from *SUBSPECIES II*.



ful and artistic—which is what you always want, but rarely get. When you see this character completely stripped of her girth and her costume, I felt it should communicate her vulnerable, cathartic moment. I would have liked camera movement, because I felt it was stationary and kind of shocking. I remember sitting at the Paramount screening and seeing the pretty dolly moves and then, all of a sudden, BOOM! There I was, there they were! And here's my manager and my mom—guilt! I've had two screenings of the film at my house and I edited it out. I don't mind that my friends see it, but let them see it when I'm not there. If it's tense scene, I think it's okay to feel sorry for this vulnerable girl. But, if you're a guy, you're checking her out and saying, 'Is that what she looks like?'

Switching gears, Duff showed muscle in New Horizons' martial arts thriller, *BLOODFIST V*. "The way it was written was I stood there with a gun, looking pretty," she laughs. "But I still get second billing. I've taken my top off for them, what do they want? It was my first Roger Corman film so it was exciting. I really want to do some comedy. I always read for the lead girls and, while I know this sounds funny, I'd like to have a small, good part in a big film. I'd like to play that sexy bimbo secretary. I don't have to be the lead in everything."

To further diminish the "boy's club" tyranny of the film business, Duff is pondering the prospect of writing her own screenplays. "I think it's an important factor for women to get into writing their own stuff," she says. The actress cites a *Femme Fatales* profile (issue 1-3) on actress-author-screenwriter Vivian Schilling as an example. "I've been looking at viewpoints and areas of life that strike a chord in me. It would probably be Woody Allen-ish. I haven't had a lot of



Duff, who has modeled across the globe, insists the above photo "is my anti-head shot, revealing the real me."

drama in my life. I haven't had anybody die and my relationships with guys have been great, they've remained friends. Until life changes, and a majority of what's going on in life is head and run and organized by women, you're not going to see a whole lot of that in film. I guess our job, related to the film industry, is to take the jump start and be

the example.

"I haven't had to stand up for my rights and really dominate a man to get what I want. I have usually been able to charm my way in and out of situations to get what I want. I never felt I couldn't get something because I'm a woman. I'm sympathetic to it, more so now that I'm starting to have a career and be an ac-

tive participant in this business. I've never had to over-compensate my strength as a person to get what I want, and that's why my character in *SUBSPECIES III* was so fun to do."

SUBSPECIES III faded out with the termination of Radu and Duff's rescue, still a child of the night, she is shielded within a body bag

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Don't call her Capt. Kirk's daughter

BEAMING ABOARD SUBSPECIES

CAPTAIN'S LOG: MELANIE SHATNER ADORES DAD, BUT PREFERS TO FIGHT HER OWN DEMONS—AND VAMPIRES AND ALIENS AND...

BY MARK A. ALTMAN

OK, so she's the daughter of William Shatner, *STAR TREK*'s "Mr. Big Shot." Naturally, some may assume that Melanie Shatner's blossoming celebrity is more likely the by-product of nepotism than talent. Think again. According to the distaff Shatner, her career is governed by the prime directive of noninterference. "I think the whole nepotism thing is definitely a really strong view that other people, who aren't related to famous people, have," she explains. "I guess a lot of times it's true, but a lot of times the kids divorce themselves from their parents and try and do it on their own—and I've been one of them. My dad and I really have an understanding. He wants to see me prove myself and he's supportive and says, 'All right, little birdie, fly out of the nest yourself. If you fly, then I'll applaud you. If not, I'll help you pick up the pieces.' To me, there seems something scary about getting a job you weren't right for. It's my butt on the line, and I wouldn't want a role if I didn't deserve it."

Shatner's devotion to drama was hardly encouraged by her family. "My parents were really adamant against me taking acting in school. They wanted me to get an education, to widen my horizons. I was really better about it in school and

I majored in psychology, because it made sense to me for theatrical stuff. I mi-

nored in theatre, and took workshops when I went to school at the University of Colorado."

Between studies, Shatner modeled and covertly attended commercial workshops in Denver. "I know, as well as anybody, how difficult it was," she says, "but it always seemed like a fun challenge to me, rather than something to be afraid of and back off. I had to wait—ness and cater my first couple of years—and I loved it.

I did the struggle, but now that I've been doing it for five years, I've been able to completely support myself." She pauses and lets loose with a giggle. "Of course, there were times when my stepmother slipped me a check under the table without my father noticing. Now it's so wonderful, because I can take them out to dinner."

Upon graduating, Shatner was cast in a small role, which gradually expanded, on *GENERAL HOSPITAL*. "It didn't last too long," she recalls. "I'm glad because I got to taste it and move on. I wouldn't mind doing a soap opera. I'm just glad I've gotten to experience other things before getting locked into something like that."

Then there were appearances in television commercials (AT&T, Sears, Taco Bell, Miller Beer), and stints on TV shows, including *KNOTS LANDING* and *DARK JUSTICE*. As a result of her fresh-scrubbed looks and all-American, girl-next-door demeanor, Shatner's earliest roles were genre-oriented. "I did a lot of little parts like *THE*

Shatner's audition for Full Moon's *ROBOT WARS* prompted her casting in *SUSPECTS II* and its sequel. She co-starred with Denise Scott in both movies.





Feeling for *TV*, Shuman retains the girl-next-door charm and shrewdest sex appeal that has impressed casting directors and repelled the kinde stereotypes. Her roles have ranged from pious to vampire killer to cowgirl cop.



William Shatner is assisted by daughter Melanie in her brief appearance in *STAR TREK V*

CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER

Melanie Shatner on growing up in the stellar shadow of Captain Kirk.

So how does it feel to be the sibling of a cultural icon? "I never really understood that my father was a legend," explains Melanie, the youngest daughter of actor, director and writer William Shatner. "I found out when I was older. I think that's important, because I didn't grow up with the slant that 'I have something you don't.' My life was just how it was—and it was quiet. My five-year-old nephew is already a *STAR TREK* fan. My dad brings him to the set, and everybody says he's going to be an actor or a director. He

stands in back of the camera and is so fascinated by it. It's amazing to watch, because he knows his grandpa is on that TV show with the man with the funny ears."

The actress is hardly tolerant of detractors who make fun of the senior Shatner. "It used to hurt me so much," she admits. "I understand the bigger you are, the more that's going to be said about you—good and bad. The other day, I was on an audition and the casting director said, 'I love your father, he's such a wonderful and giving man.' And I really appreciated that, most

people don't share the good things. They think you're only curious about the bad things—and I'm not. I don't need to know. I have my own relationship with him. I don't need to defend him because his life is its own defense. He's great and he's worked hard, and that comes with a certain price attached to it. I think to be where he is doesn't come without stepping on a few toes."

And is the "captain's daughter" an addict of her old man's series? "I only started to watch *STAR TREK* when I got older, and I realized how much fun it was," relates Shatner. "It used to scare me when I was little because it seemed so dark and scary. There were these aliens which I totally believed in. I thought monsters lurked in the drain in the bathroom, and there was a shark in the pool. That's another reason I know I get these horror movies, because my imagination and fear is so strong. When I'm chased by some vampire, it takes very little to get me screaming and crying."

Mark Altman

FIRST POWER," she smiles. "I was also in *STAR TREK V*, which my dad directed." Shatner made her leading lady debut in *BLACK MAGIC MANSION*, a titillated *OTHULHU MANSION* for the video market. "It was a B-movie and I played a young gang member. It was my first lead role and you could tell, I look at it now and I'm not embarrassed, but I could tell I needed to go to voice class."

After experiencing the perks of big-budget movies, even as a minor supporting player, Shatner was hardly prepared for the aggravation of a bargain basement production. "They had no chairs for us, and it was freezing cold and we worked all night," she sighs. "I sat in a sink in the woman's bathroom, resting my head on a towel dispenser and shaking. I remember hearing the playback and asking the sound guy if my voice was in slow motion. I was so cold, I couldn't speak! I was appalled and I realized what all those perks are for: It's to keep the actors comfortable, and looking good and acting well, so that they can talk. Otherwise, you're in trouble."

Next on Shatner's agenda was *SYNGENOR*, a less stressful B-film. "It stands for Synthetic Genetic Organism," she smiles. "I loved that. I played someone who's 17 turning 18, and all the employees were trying to pick on her. She was so naive and accidentally ends up letting the monster out of the dungeon. It was really fun."

Charles Band's *Full Moon* Entertainment provided Shatner with her biggest break, casting her in the second and third installments of the *SUB-SPECIES* trilogy. Shatner's character is introduced as a spunky woman who, upon answering an emergency call from Michelle (Denise Duff), her sister, travels to Bucharest and plunges into a decadent milieu of vampirism. The actress spent nearly



DeForest Kelley, Bill Shatner and Leonard Nimoy in the original *STAR TREK*

four months in Romania shooting Part II (BLOODSTONE) and Part III (BLOODLUST) back-to-back. "I remember, one night, we did four scenes from the two different scripts, going back and forth between the two," says Shatner as her eyes roll into her head. "Because of the time constraints, they wanted to keep the camera and the lighting set up for all the master shots. In each master, I had to change my clothes and then we did the four close-ups from each scene. I had a breakdown. It was four in the morning and, in the beginning, I couldn't do it. But, of course, you can and you do and you get by, and it never got as bad as that again."

Shatner's casting was prompted by her physical resemblance to actress Laura Tate, who portrayed Michelle—the object of bloodlust in Rado's fixation—in the first SUBSPECIES movie. "We both looked the same," explains Shatner. "I was reading for a different Charlie Baud movie, ROBOT WARS, and they liked my reading but said I was perfect to play Laura Tate's sister in SUBSPECIES II. At the time, they were still negotiating with Laura and they cast me. Then they found out they were going to have to recast Michelle and that's when Denise was cast, with whom I became so close. We were like sisters in Romania. We took care of each other."

Hardly a globe-trotter, Shatner was less than impressed with the prospect of shooting a movie on another continent. "I was terrified!" she exclaims. "I'm not good at leaving home. I hate to fly, and it's a 24-hour flight with three layovers. I was in Rome for eight hours, and I called my best friend on the phone



Though SUBSPECIES II (above) & III further launched her film career, Shatner's goal is to produce children movies. Shatner and Denise Duff (above), smiling for AP photographer Martin Martin, show the behind-the-scenes comradery they sustained on the Full Moon productions

and started to cry. She's a seasoned traveller and a model and said, 'You haven't even left yet!' So I hopped on a Romanian airline, which was like a 1940's army plane that doesn't even have shelves that close, they have netting! Everyone was smoking and we stopped in a place called Tershina. I thought I was in Tehran and that I had gotten on the wrong plane." Upon arriving at the Bucharest airport she "saw the production assistants and Vlad Paunescu, the producer, waiting for me. They

were all smiling and waving, and I never had a bad moment after that."

But one SUBSPECIES scene, which didn't make the final cut, understates "bad moment." "I had to run across the railroad tracks, without seeing a train that was coming, so I really didn't look. Then I slipped, almost fell under the train, and I almost vomited. Afterwards, I was so excited to get it on film...except that a lighting generator had failed, and the entire shot was ruined."

Equally distressing was

the obligatory nude scene. "It was definitely scary," nods Shatner. "Denise and I are both thin, but because we were so nervous about doing it, we started eating uncontrollably. As the scene got closer, we started to eat more and more. It was sort of a running joke and it caused us a lot of pain. I think the only time I would ever do it again is if I felt it was not gratuitous. In SUBSPECIES, I felt it was a little gratuitous—although it could have been a lot worse." She pauses. "It was tastefully gratuitous. In the third one, I had to take my jacket off and I was naked underneath, but it was shot from behind. Denise saw it before I did, and I asked her how I looked. It's totally ego based, more than anything else. Does anyone feel they're Miss America? I think we all feel there's so much more we can do to look better



and feel better. There are always the usual neuroses and you're never satisfied with yourself, and always trying to improve. It's sort of an ego thing, in that you worry what people will say and what you'll feel when you see yourself nude."

Upon her return to America, Shatner saddled-up for a project that eluded genre typecasting. "In ROUND-UP, I play a cowgirl roper," she grins. "I had a wonderful time because I love to ride. It's one of my passions, and this was defi-

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PH

HER GETAWAY

BY ANN BASS

At the age of 19, she finally found her freedom from the family, the scent of formaldehyde, and the dead people. Arriving in Los Angeles, Phyllis Davis intended to hone her acting skills at the Hollywood Pasadena Playhouse. "But I was just too shy," she recalls, "so I took a job as a dancer/extra and people would see me on the set and just give me jobs. That's how I got started." Her earliest credit has been traced to **THE LAST OF THE SECRET AGENTS** (1965), the sole screen vehicle developed for nightclub comedians Marty Allen and Steve Ross. "I remember going around in a bikini, having to hold some dog which got into a fight with a chicken," laughs Davis. "I

As a model, Davis (left) declined to pose for *Cosmopolitan* ("It was scary to succeed"). She debuted in **LAST OF THE SECRET AGENTS** (below)



YLLIS DAVIS

FROM WOMEN-IN-PRISON FILMS INTO PRIME TIME.

had the dog and someone was carrying the chicken, and we had to sit next to each other. There was a lot of feathers all over the place."

Work was also accessible in Elvis Presley vehicles. But Davis performed a function no different from other aspirant starlets, including Teri Garr and Raquel Welch, who were cast in The King's movies: serve only as window dressing. "I met Elvis, and he thought I looked like Priscilla at the time, so I got into every film he did. I worked as a dancer, an extra, anything—I just sat there and collected a check." Graduating to a minor role, her appearance as a secretary earned Davis a screen credit in Presley's 1968 musical, LIVE A LITTLE, LOVE A LITTLE.

The following year, Davis was offered THE ARRANGEMENT, a film that could have been a turning point in her career. But she denied herself the opportunity to work with legendary director Elia Kazan and a prestigious cast that included Kirk Douglas and Faye Dunaway. "I held up shooting on it," Davis admits. "Kazan had to stop production—I didn't show up. I said, 'Oh no, they're going to show my breasts.' I had been living with somebody [Bill Harman] for years, and he kept saying that it was horrible that I was going to show my breasts. He had killed himself in an accident a few days before production. We had broken up, but he had dropped his gun and it killed him. Valerie Perrine was dating him, she was a nude showgirl at the time. She called me and I



While laughing at Paramount, Davis was asked "Do you have a bikini? Can you read lines?" She was promptly cast in the TV series, LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE.

took her to the funeral. Anyway, I used that as an excuse. I should have done THE ARRANGEMENT and gone for it."

She later landed a gig, as a repertory player, on the weekly TV series LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE (1970-74). "I walked into Paramount to have lunch with somebody," recounts Davis. "They had already looked at 200 girls, and I didn't even have an interview. I walked in, and somebody saw me and said, 'Do you have a bikini? Can you do lines?' They gave me a few lines to do in front of the network people and the producers, and I got it that day. It was a fluke and it lasted for years."

Concurrent with her stretch on the series, Davis was cast in movies that earned her adulation as a drive-in diva. Her film career got off to an auspicious start when a feud with Russ Meyer later erupted into a bitter showdown, even reported but unresolved in the pages of TV Guide. "It was while I was doing LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE," explains Davis. "I tested for BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS (1970), and no one could see the script. We thought it was like 1967's VALLEY OF THE DOLLS, that it was a sequel. I thought I was doing Barbara Parkins' role from the original, and I had no idea who Russ Meyer was. I screen tested and I got it—on the first day I got the script—and it was not the Barbara Parkins role. Meyer and I didn't care for one another. I wasn't the type he was exactly looking for. I had to go out in the desert



Perpetually bikini-clad, Davis (center, seated on couch) served as an extra in *THE SWINGER* (1966). Other hopefuls: *THE WITCHMAKER*'s Thelma Brandt (directly behind Davis), Chloe Lee (top row, right) and Katie Everts (far right, kneeling).

and, all of a sudden, they couldn't find my clothes and they wanted me to go nude. It was not a happy situation. I can't say it was Russ Meyer's fault. I just wasn't what he wanted. I was the best on the test as an actress, but I wasn't good at what he portrayed. I went to see it and I quit show business for a while after I saw myself. I was as bad [laughs]. Afterward, the producers from *LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE* had dinner with me, calming me down and telling me, "No, don't quit. OK, you were bad—but so was everyone else."

"Her machete isn't her only weapon...They're women, they're warm, they're wildcats!"

Ad for SWEET SUGAR

Though *SWEET SUGAR* (1972) endeared her to B-film addicts, Davis' recollections about the tropical "women-in-prison" quickie are less than pleasant. "Like the Russ Meyer picture," she sighs, "I was just

thrilled to do any movie. At the time I was living in New York, and I would fly back and forth to do *LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE*. I was modeling in New York and making more money doing that, but I came out to test for another part and wound up with *SWEET SUGAR*. I had signed a 'no frontal nudity' agreement and when I got to Costa Rica, all of a sudden I had to go nude. So I called the union and said I refused, and they said I'd get sued. They weren't helpful at all. I'll always remember that. I had to hire a lawyer, myself, and I was only making scale starring in this film. He went down there, so I wouldn't have to do full-frontal nudity. It was kind of sad because one girl jumped out of a building, and it was just one mishap after mishap. I think it was one of the director's [Michael Levenson] only directing jobs."

"A hell-crazy colony of criminals...lusty, busting babes ripe with desire...they're unleashed, un-

chained. UNCONTROL-LABLE!"

TERMINAL ISLAND Radio spot

Davis experienced similar problems with the following year's *TERMINAL ISLAND*, another "penal colony" film that later earned notoriety as one of co-star Tom Selleck's closet B's. "I was still living in New York," explains Davis, "and I remember they didn't want me to be blonde for the picture. *TERMINAL ISLAND* was fun except, again, I had signed a 'no-frontal nudity' contract. No big deal. I mean, it was just a low budget film. I wouldn't mind being nude in a good film [laughs]. So I jumped in a river nude, and they were supposed to shut the camera off when I came out. Seven or eight years later, it shows up in a magazine—me, standing naked. They had sold the rights. I wouldn't have complained, but it was a terrible picture. I sued 'em but after so many years, your contracts aren't good anymore. The produc-

tion company had gone bankrupt, and I just dropped it. Tom Selleck didn't want anyone to know about the film, he hardly had any dialogue. Roger E. Mosley was in it too, and that's how Roger got his co-starring role on *MAGNUM P.I.* Tom was helping cast the show, and he brought Roger in."

Between B-movies, Davis was cast in *DAY OF THE DOLPHIN*, an A-film that shifted into another lost opportunity. "DOLPHIN was just a little part. Actually, before I'd been a brunette, I had long hair to my waist. Someone gave me the wrong message about the part, that I had to be blonde, so I walked in with short, blonde hair and they gave me this little hambo part. We shot it in Miami. I was sorry I had bleached my hair because I wanted the other part, so I could play with the dolphins. The director, Mike Nichols, called me back for another movie [1976's *BOGART SLEPT HERE*] that I shot for Warner Brothers and it was never released."

"In the film, I played a Marilyn Monroe-himbo again. It was like I was on Johnny Carson's show, and I had to pretend I was some movie star and he had me ad lib. I was really disappointed. It was written by Neil Simon. Robert DeNiro and Neil Simon's then-wife [Marsha Mason] starred in it. 'Creative differences,' you know, and they closed the whole thing down." It was later disclosed that Nichols

TERMINAL ISLAND (1973). Though "supposed to be shut off," cameras rolled when Davis surfaced in the buff. Her review of the film [p. 1] "Terrible."



“Russ Meyer and I didn’t care for one another. I had to go in the desert and, *all of a sudden*, they couldn’t find my clothes—they wanted me to go nude.”

fired DeNiro during the first week of filming. The project later evolved into *THE GOODBYE GIRL* (1977).

Davis was subsequently cast in *TRAIN RIDE TO HOLLYWOOD* (1975), a “lost” film that prompts only dim memories. “I don’t remember the story too well,” she claims. “I think it was all a dream sequence. I think they got knocked out in the train station. I played Scarlett O’Hara and I really had a ball. I loved the director, Charlie Rondonu, who did almost all of the comedy blackouts on *LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE*. He was a madman, but he was really good.” The supporting cast included Roberta Collins, a B-Queen who performed in her own share of woman-in-prison epics (*THE BIG DOLL HOUSE*, *CAGED HEAT*). “She was very sweet,” smiles Davis. “Roberta played Harlow, with a cigarette holder in her mouth and a white satin dress.”

The obscure film was eventually released by Billy Jack Enterprises. “I thought it would be successful, it seemed cute,” explains Davis. “I brought the president of Avco-Embassy, who was a friend of a friend, to

the set to see if he would distribute the film. And the producers, these two kids... One of them said, ‘I don’t know, he looks like a greasy meatball to me.’ I remember thinking, ‘I can’t believe he’s being rude to this guy.’ The guy had gone out of his way to come on to the set and, at the time, Avco was a big company.”

But it was *THE CHOIRBOYS* (1977) that drew Davis closer to the mainstream. Though critically lambasted, the movie coasted on Davis’ risqué role as a dominatrix. “I tested for that and I was great in the test,” she recalls. “...except there were two parts to it. The first was talking, and I was real good. But the second part was me beating somebody and it was a joke. I’m going [in a thin, high voice], ‘Now, take that!’ They said, ‘Phyllis, do you want the part? You can’t do it like that. You’ve got something to learn.’ I knew nothing about that type of life. So I got one of those newspapers, I think the *Free Press* was out at that time, and I called every S&M place—and every woman who answered to Queen-this or *Mistress-that*—and I hired them. I hired some



Davis dazzles *TERMINAL ISLAND* as “just a low-budget film.” Supporting cast included *LOST IN SPACE*’s Marc Kitten and Vampirella model, Barbara Leigh.

girl, and found out she was a guy. She had a sex change, and now decided she was gay and liked girls.

“The others I would talk to actually thought they were the normal ones, they really did. They were beating these guys. That was okay, I guess. I mean, whatever turns you on, it doesn’t turn me on, but the problem was I had just had an interview with this other director—and he walked in to be beaten. I thought I would die [laughs]. He wanted to be beaten with high-heeled shoes. I decided I learned enough.”

Davis won the role over a couple of statuesque contenders. “I tested for it with

Julie Newmar, that really big girl who played Catwoman. I thought for sure that she would get it. And Lana Wood, Nathe’s sister, tested for it. Lana Wood had earlier gotten a movie from me that I already had been offered. It was a James Bond movie, *DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER*. I was the only one they tested and I was told I had it when, all of a sudden, they gave it to her! I don’t know what happened, I was so disappointed. I still get residuals from it, even though I never did the role.”

The actress finally remembers *THE CHOIRBOYS* as “one of James Woods’ first movies. The director, Robert





"I went on tour for THE CHOIRBOYS. I was living with Dawn Martin, who put herself in the hospital, and I left the tour. Sorry I did, because he wasn't sick."

Aldrich, would get mad at him because he was always putting his face toward the camera. Everytime he'd walk out the door, he'd turn around and look out. Whatever he did, he did right I guess. But Aldrich would get so mad. 'CUT!' Davis' laughter fades. "Although the picture ended up a comedy, I didn't want to be the one who made it a comedy. Unfortunately, it bombed. They didn't know which way to go with it." But her exclusion from major league filmmaking can't solely be blamed on the boxoffice failure of THE CHOIRBOYS. There were other problems.

Davis admits the amount

of times she didn't show up for an assignment exceeds her actual film credits. "I was scared all of the time. I was always finding excuses. I still get stressed out, but not usually in front of the camera. A while ago, I did something with David Hasselhoff [the KNIGHT RIDER TV pilot]. I was so stressed out, because my dad was dying, that they had to loop-in my voice—I was shaking that much! I knew I wouldn't be able to get off to the funeral and I got so stressed, I couldn't talk. They picked a beautiful voice, but I would have preferred to have done it myself [laughs]. Stress just gets me sick. I have lupus,

"I knew *nothing* about that type of life. So I called every S&M place, and every woman that said *Queen-this* or *Mistress-that*, and I hired them."

so I really have to avoid that."

Her debilitating stage fright may be attributed to a friendless childhood in Port Arthur, Texas. "My parents owned a mortuary, and I had to go through the embalming room to get to my bedroom. All my life, there was not being allowed to talk because there was a funeral every day. I was very shy. My parents had such a weird sense of humor. It wasn't even a sense of humor, they couldn't understand why I would get upset. I would come back from the beach and my mother would holler from the house, 'Phyllis! Your best friend just died!' and it would be true. And then they'd say, 'What are you crying about?' At 19, and out of college, I finally left for L.A. My parents came after me because they thought all actresses were whores, and I should be a mortician.

"I went back home for a class reunion. I was washing my hair and I said, 'Mother, where's the hair dryer?' I had to go down to the embalming room and lay on a slab to dry my hair, because the hair dryer was attached to the slab. And I'm lying there and there's this corpse next to me, and it's my ex-boyfriend's brother. And my mother's going, 'Boy, he's a hippie, look at that long hair.' I got into a big fight with my mother: 'How dare you talk about him!' It should have been a sitcom.

"I'm not scared of dead people, or anything like that, but I've been scared of people. I'm more comfortable around the dead, to be honest with you. I'm so afraid of everything. It's

held me back."

The chronic fear continues to plague the actress. "I went to acting class last week," Davis relates, "and told them I couldn't do it because I forgot my glasses, though I had three pair in my purse. I drove around the block three times before going to acting class, yet, in front of the camera, 'You want me to take my clothes off? Okay.' Because it's somebody else. I become the character, so I'm fine. It's a mental thing. Anyway, my acting coach wouldn't let me get away with it. He said, 'You're doing it.' I need people to just say, 'Oh shut up, Phyllis.' That's why I like Aaron Spelling so well. He'd say, 'No excuses, just do it.' I felt very secure with him."

Spelling, whose production ensemble turned into Davis' surrogate family, cast the actress in his television shows ("about ten episodes of LOVE BOAT and FANTASY ISLAND") and made-for-TV movies, including SIZZLE and THE WILD WOMEN OF CHASTITY GULCH. "I worked so much for Spelling," smiles Davis, "that I never had to work for anyone else at the time. It's bad to get that secure, because you don't meet anybody else or expand. But it was so easy

SWEET SUGAR (1972). At the time, Davis was "thrilled to do any movie."



and fun."

Davis earned a regular role on the VEGAS TV series (1978-1981) via a very impromptu meeting with Spelling's wife. "I was in a beauty shop, crying," explains Davis. "I was a brunette again, I was living with Dean Martin and he wanted me to bleach my hair and look like [his ex-wife] Jeanne. I was very upset, he kept telling me that I looked too young. So I was cutting my hair and bleaching it blonde, and some woman was sitting at the shampoo bowl. It ended up being Candy Spelling. She said, 'You're doing this for Dean Martin, aren't you? Well, you're stupid because he only likes people who take advantage of him. And you're doing everything for him. I know Dean and you can't treat him nice.'"

"She was tearing into me, and she had never met me. She left and I forgot about it. Then I got this call from my agent about VEGAS. He says, 'You've got an interview for a blonde bimbo.' Candy did it as a joke. She called me 'dummy,' then she got me an interview for a dumb broad. But I didn't get that part, Judy Landers got it. I got the secretary, thank God, because they fired Judy Landers after a few weeks when they decided not to go in that direction."

Appearing on the final season of MAGNUM, P.I., Davis was reunited with TERMINAL ISLAND costars Tom Selleck and Roger E. Mosley. "First, I was a hooker, then I was Tom's secretary in a dream sequence, and for some rea-



Above: The SWEET SUGAR crew, based in Costa Rica, prepare to shoot Davis' torture scenes. Right: Reuniting with actor Timothy Brown

son—in the last show—I married his sidekick, Larry Manetti," laughs Davis. "I loved doing that show. The crew was absolutely wonderful, no bickering, no jealousy. Tom's a gentle, nice person."

In fact, Davis' affection for Selleck prompted a rare conflict with Spelling. "He got mad at me because I went to Yugoslavia two weeks before shooting one of his TV movies. For some reason, he thought I wasn't going to show up for the show...I can't imagine why [laughs a lot]. I went to Yugoslavia to see Tom, who was doing a film there [HIGH ROAD TO CHINA]. I guess there was an airline strike because I ended up in Venice. I didn't know where I was, just went out in the street and said, 'Tom?'"

"I slept in the cab and, when I woke up, I was in Yugoslavia,—except for the



time they pulled me out of the cab at the border. Tom had said he wanted some magazines like *Newsweek* and stuff like that—'cause we're friends, there was no romantic thing there—and I brought girly magazines as a joke, not thinking it was against the law. They opened my suitcases, ripped me out of the cab and put the lights on me [laughs]."

Davis was back on famil-

iar turf in GUNS (1980), a shoot 'em up starring a repertory of Playboy Playmates. She describes the producers, Andy and Arlene Sidaris, as "fun. They even say about their movies, 'Well, it's not going to be any big award winner.' But they're fun to work with. That's what's more important." If GUNS is more memorable than past Sidaris films, it may be be-

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Shooting SWEET SUGAR, Davis hired a lawyer to avoid mortal reality.



THE WOMEN OF GUYVER II

SCIENCE FICTION SHAPES UP

LOOKING FOR SEX-STARVED SPACE BIMBOS? TRY SOMEWHERE ELSE. THIS FEMALE CAST SHOWS MORE STRENGTH THAN SKIN.

BY MARK A. ALTMAN



Merging science fiction, farce, and a cast that appealed to genre addicts, **THE GUYVER** turned into a cult hit. It also turned a profit, prompting the inevitable sequel which New Line Cinema will premiere this summer. In addition to surplus stunts, pyrotechnics and hardware, **GUYVER: DARK HERO** delivers an arsenal of more exotic bombshells; this second time around, the intergalactic hero takes a back seat to a heavy of fledgling *femmes fatales*.

Steve Wang (**KUNG FU RASCALS**), who directed the first installment in collaboration with effects wizard Screaming Mad George, encores in Part II. Once again, the earth requires defense from the deadly *Zoanoids* and their human sponsors, the Chronos Corporation. Meanwhile, the *Guyver's* attempt to convert his alien armor into an urban jungle survival kit is less than successful; in fact, his vigilante activities result in some serious mishaps for the city that is under his surveillance. Things turn from bad to worse when the superhero discovers the Chronos Corporation is back in operation, funding an archeological dig in Utah.

Role reversal: an alien predator needs rescue from Kathy Christopher, whom you may recognize from **LUCAS** (1994).



Cost as a combative
bitchwoman from outer
space, Veronica Reed
shines inside.
"Veronica," notes
associate producer Wyatt
Wood, "is a seasoned
character actress who is
developing into a Sarah
Dugdale-type. She'll be
around for a long time."



Alisa Martins, who hooks as L.A. radio show, portrays an investigative reporter. "This is Alisa's first speaking role on film," explains Wood. "I've been trying to work with her for years. She's very heavy into sarcasm, and has made a fantastic baller out of me."

"It was a struggle for these actresses to do cheesecake pictures for your magazine... they relate to the assertiveness of their screen characters."

A large warehouse in Van Nuys, California served as the Utah location. "More impressive than the science fiction gadgets was the assembly of attendant actresses who posed for our camera."

Kathy Christopherson portrays Cori, daughter of a prominent scientist who is a pawn of the corrupt corporation. It seems dad is involved in the recovery of "deadly interstellar weapons," preserved within an alien spacecraft that Chronos is excavating from the Utah site. Enlightened that a tablet TV show's chronicle about "werewolves" is actually an imperceptive account of sinister aliens (the *Zoanoids*), Cori unites with the Guyver to rescue her father. Ann George, a veteran of numerous commercials and print modeling gigs, joins the fight as Gail, Cori's best friend.

Alisa Merline is Brandy, the investigative reporter who anchors the film's lampoon of CURRENT AFFAIR/HARD COPY journalism. Merline's past experience certainly qualified her for the role. Formerly a midwest cable-TV reporter, she is currently hosting a popular L.A. radio show. "Alisa is very sexy," enthused *FF* photographer Martin Martin. "The camera just loves to make love to her."

Posing for our sneak peek, Kristen Colkins stepped out of character as Lita, an archaeologist ensnared in Chronos' diabolical scheme. "Kristen has a wonderful flair for comedy," explains Wyatt Weed, the film's associate producer and second unit director. "In the film, she plays a real dingbat, a blonde bombshell who the scientists are coming onto. Unfortunately, to get the

film down to a two-hour running time, a lot of that ended up on the proverbial cutting room floor."

"The nice thing about Kristen," added Weed, "is that her background is in special effects and as a model builder. She wants to be an actress, but on her own terms. She's not going to sleep with anyone to get a part."

Weed is equally enthusiastic about Marina Cody, who is cast as an archaeologist. "She loved working on GUYVER because it was her first big speaking role where she was able to keep her clothes on." Smiling pleasantly, Cody vowed to "keep them on for *Femme Fatales*, too. Hopefully, they'll stay on for awhile."

As Sten, the corporation's hisssable headwoman, Veronica Reed plays the role with panache. Her background includes vaudeville and assorted stage roles, but the GUYVER sequel affords Reed another challenge; in one scene, she transforms into a Zoanoid in an effort to compete with the hero.

As we packed up our camera equipment, Weed offered commentary on his film-in-progress: "It's ex-



No more disbarment scenes for Marina Cody. "We go back a long way," says Weed. "GUYVER: DARK HERO offered Marina her first high-profile role."

tremely ambitious for the budget they gave us. Fortunately, we had complete freedom and were able to achieve multi-million-dollar production values on a budget of less than a million dollars. I wouldn't recommend to anyone shooting an action film in a warehouse in Van Nuys—in the middle of August!—because as the temperatures soared, so did tempers. But I think the film speaks for itself, and the women are just terrific."

Regarding the female cast, Weed noted that "Ann George and Kathy Christopherson are headed for serious movies. They have the training. Nudity wasn't necessary for this film because the characters are very educated. They portray strong women, they're assertive and sexy, so nudity would have only been a distraction. Besides, the fantasy and intrigue elements are strong enough."

So can we expect a GUYVER 3? "Steve's really tired from this, and he isn't sure if he wants to do it again," sighed Weed. "But when James Cameron wrapped *TERMINATOR II*, they asked him if he would do a third film and he said, 'No way...but ask me again in a year.' I guess you could say the same for Steve." □

The women of GUYVER: DARK HERO (left to right): Marina Cody, Ann George, Kathy Christopherson, Veronica Reed, Alisa Merline and Kristen Colkins.



Photographed by Martin Martin. Produced and directed by Mark A. Altman. Special thanks to Wyatt Weed as the Zoanoid, Steve Wang, Alisa Merline, Kristen Colkins and Marina Cody.

D'ABO

EXTRICATING HERSELF FROM BOND-AGE, MARYAM D'ABO PLUNGES INTO ROLES RANGING FROM VAMPIRE TO MAD DOCTOR

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

Ursula Andress, Maud Adams, Barbara Bach, Carole Bouquet, Carey Lowell, et al; their careers have shifted into marginal successes or lucrative subsistence, with jobs ranging from perfum pitchwoman to esteem star. But they'll always be linked, in the public consciousness, to a past role as a Bond girl. Jane Seymour survived the curse, but only after a tenure as "Queen of the Miniseries" and a developing a decidedly anti-Bond heroine with *DR. QUINN, MEDICINE WOMAN*. Maryam D'Abo hopes the curse of playing the sex object will be similarly lifted from her film legacy.

A cosmopolitan figure by profession as well as heritage, her mother's roots are traced to the Georgian area of the Soviet Union ("Maryam" is the equivalent of Mary). "D'Abo is my father's name," explains the London-born actress. "It's from a town in Finland called Turku Obo, and that's where our ancestors started six hundred years ago."

Determined to further her fledgling career, D'Abo entered London's Drama



D'Abo as "the Bond girl," with Timothy Dalton as 007, in *THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS*.

Center while working as a model in commercials. A near-surrealistic sci-fi film, *XYRO* (1982), served as D'Abo's feature film debut. "It was shot in London," she recalls with little enthusiasm. "I had gone to an audition and got the role. This basically got me my work permit. In England, you can't work unless you have a work permit. It was a ter-

rrible movie." Two years later, she was cast opposite Harry Hamlin and Dyan Cannon in a CBS miniseries, *MASTER OF THE GAME*.

Bond epic #15, *THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS* (1987), provided D'Abo with international exposure and the producers with headaches. "There was a lot of near-panic on the set," relates the

actress, "because they didn't know until the last minute that they would have to change stars. Pierce Brosnan got caught up in his series [*REMINGTON STEELE*] and Timothy Dalton, who had originally turned down the role, agreed to step in as the globe-trotting spy."

D'Abo's casting was prompted by her role in *LAUGHTER IN THE DARK*, a German film with Maximilian Schell that collapsed halfway through production. "The director showed it to United Artists in America to try and get it refinanceed," she explains. "They saw me and thought I was interesting enough to play the Czechoslovakian part in the Bond movie. Although 007 producer Cubby and Barbara Broccoli both knew me, they thought I was too young for it. They had asked me to do a screen test about seven months before. In this German film, I had my hair cut short and I had lost a lot of weight, so I looked more Slavic and older and better prepared to play the role. So everyone agreed to have me."

Landing the role of Kara Milovy, the paramour of treacherous General Koslov, D'Abo required instruction for riding horses and



Richard Gere's ballet dancer turns ballerina in **TOBIACAT DANGEROUS DESIRES** (top). The intense love scenes between D'Abo and Gere (right) were shot on a closed set.

"You're exposed to press conferences...It was kind of draining to hear you're a sex symbol, drilled into you all the time that you're a Bond girl."

007. "They were constantly asking him if he would be as good as the other Bonds when, actually, he was trying to be as different as he could...creating his own image." And D'Abo was hardly treated with kid gloves. "It was kind of draining to hear you're a sex symbol, drilled into you all the time...and that you're a Bond girl."

The publicity fueled

drink coffee, I get drunk! I would read minds because I have ESP, which created a lot of controversy and comedic situations.

"It had a very interesting premise to start off with. It was a four-hour pilot, it was at the time when Brandon Tartikoff was there and it was one of the most expensive pilots. The ratings were very good, and it was picked up as a series. But then, there was a writer's strike and we couldn't do the series for about four months—which really messed things up. The series lost a lot of its quality because they were in such a hurry to get the scripts done. They kept to develop the characters, and the program lost its identity as a series. I think I was also very affected by the amount of hard work we had on the series. It was grueling work. We were working 15 hours a day and when you're the only two

D'Abo's career. She was soon in demand, and in America, shooting an NBC pilot titled **SOMETHING IS OUT THERE** (1988). Written and produced by Frank Lupo, creator of the **WEREWOLF** TV series, D'Abo was cast as an outer space alien named Ta'ra. "The script for that show was exciting," she comments, "because it was the mixture of a thriller with a sci-fi look at night. It also had a real comedic side to it in the relationship between the two lead characters. The exciting thing was that these two characters are so opposite from one another. One is an alien who doesn't understand how things function on Earth, and the other is a street cop. I thought it would be funny to develop these two characters who argue all the time. My character had very funny traits. On the planet I came from, you make love by shaking hands. When I

D'Abo played an alien who makes love by shaking hands in the sci-fi series **SOMETHING IS OUT THERE**.



lessons on pretending to play the cello, which she simulated while following music with other musicians. She describes the lavishly-produced movie as "a great experience. It was five months of being treated well, traveling in chartered planes, filming in wonderful locations—in reality, really romantic places like Vienna and Morocco. And being on a Bond crew was wonderful. The nerve-wracking part was with the press and the amount of work I had to do as a Bond girl. I was suddenly exposed to press conferences, and traveling around the world. It was a bit draining."

The Afghanistan sequences were actually shot in Morocco, both in the port city of Tangier and the desert town of Quarzazate, just east of the Atlas Mountains and the border of the legendary caravan trail into the Sahara. "I'm a great

traveler," smiles D'Abo, "so when I wasn't working, I was visiting desert villages that were built into the earth. We found a castle about ten miles from the town which belongs to a king, which you could rent for the evening and so they cooked a meal, the most delicious couscous, we sat around on the floor to eat it.

"The Quarzazate studio is really funny. You go down a long, grand alley and there's this huge stone wall, and you go through the entrance and it's just the desert. We were there for about six weeks, and I did a lot of riding with the guys. I was the only gal along with all these men, galloping in the desert. It was kind of like **LAWRENCE OF ARABIA**."

D'Abo remembers the press applying considerable pressure on Dalton, who was making his debut as

leads in a show, it's exhausting. I found that I didn't have the time to play around with my character. We had a lot of night shooting downtown in south central L.A., all the dangerous areas. There was a lot of pressure."

The series was short-lived, but D'Abo renewed her genre ties in NIGHT-LIFE. Her character, Angelique, is a literal vamp who sleeps for a century to elude her former boyfriend, also a vampire. "NIGHT-LIFE was a lot of fun," gushes D'Abo. "I basically woke up a hundred years later, still wearing a 19th-Century dress. I have terrible problems trying to get the blood I need. I end up in a hospital, because they think I have some kind of disease like AIDS. I fall in love with this doctor, but he doesn't know I'm a vampire. Then I've got my 'ex,' from a thousand years ago, who is following me because he wants me back. It was kind of a funny spoof of vampires—you have gay vampires and all kinds of things. The doctor becomes a vampire and we end up happily ever after, living in Mexico and dancing the Mariachi. It was an effort, funny movie for the USA network."

Maryann's cousin, Olivia D'Abo (TV's WUNDER YEARS), portrayed Kirk Douglas' persona in GREEDY



"The greatest fear for any actor is that great characters are disappearing, and it's all about action. Roles for women are too few and far between."



D'Abo made her film debut as an overcast maid in KTFG. An effects team transformed her stomach into an alien breeding ground.

But five weeks of shooting in Mexico City did have its share of repercussions. "It was a rough time," admits D'Abo. "I got sick from drinking milk at the Intercontinental Hotel in the morning. Ten minutes later, major sickness. I was sick for about nine days. We were shooting at night, so it was tough from that level. It may have been good for the part, because I'm supposed to look very gaunt and pale. It was a terrible nine days."

Her subsequent encounter with the supernatural was played straight. As Cliff De Young's new bride in IMMORTAL SINS, D'Abo takes residence in D'Alvarez manor, the ancestral home of her screen spouse. The couple are confronted by a succubus, played by Shari Shattuck (THE NAKED GAGE, BODY CHEMISTRY 3), who was condemned to death centuries ago. The film was shot in Madrid, Spain and in the northern province of Galicia. "The region there is like the Brittany of France," explains

D'Abo. "It's very backwards. There is hardly any communication. That's where the castle is. There is a family curse hanging over the D'Alvarez family. I'm trying to save my husband when I realize what is happening."

"It was shot by cinematographer Alfredo Mayo, so it's beautifully filmed. There is hardly any communication. That's where the castle is. There is a family curse hanging over the D'Alvarez family. I'm trying to save my husband when I realize what is happening."

D'Abo admits her next genre credit, TOMCAT: DANGEROUS DESIRES (1993), written and directed by Paul Duvall, provoked some anxiety. "It's a very dramatic role," she says. "I play a scientist who does a lot of research with animals. Richard Grieco plays a ballet dancer who has a disease which renders him paralyzed. I do an illegal experi-

ment, switching genes from a cat into his genes. He is cured, but develops the mind of a cat. As the cat plays with birds and kills them, he starts to play with people and kills them. I realize I created a monster, but I'm totally obsessed and in love with him. I become a victim and commit suicide."

The role called for a love-making sequence with Grieco. "I have a semi-nude scene in the film," notes D'Abo. "It's only the top part of my breasts, but not full frontal nudity, which I've never done. I've shown my breasts before on the screen. I sometimes agree if it's part of the plot, and it's okay within the situation and the story."

"Nudity is not a comfortable thing to do. The movie starts off with a love scene, and that was really hard to do. It was just about on our faces, but we actually had to get into it as everything is shown on your face. It was pretty intense to do that, and I was very uncomfortable. Paul, Richard, and everyone was great about making it as comfortable as possible, making it a closed set and getting that intensity, which basically is defining the relationship between these two characters."

Her judgment was tested in ANOTHER WOMAN'S LIPSTICK (1993), the third installment of Showtime's RED SHOE DIARIES. D'Abo's character discovers her husband has been unfaithful. She dresses in men's clothes, dons a mustache, and sets out to seduce her spouse's mistress, which results in a lesbian love scene.

Less provocative was "Well Cooked Hams," an episode of TALES FROM THE CRYPT. Co-starring with Martin Sheen and Billy Zane on the HBO series, D'Abo describes Grete, the assistant to an inept but deadly magician, as one of



D'Abo in *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*'s "Wail Cooled Heirs." As a man, she seduces her husband's mistress in *ANOTHER WOMAN'S LIPSTICK* (below).

her favorite roles. "I played another comedic character. She's ambitious, with a ruthlessness to her. She's also frustrated because she's working with a magician who is a total disaster. She's extremely camp, and quite mad, and very Germanic. All her scenes are filled with anger, and frustration, and disdain for this failed magician. It's very funny to watch."

"The director, Elliott Silverstein, used to be an actor many years ago, so he really knows how to deal with actors. I like working with him, he knows when you're going over the top and he's very quick. I went in at four o'clock in the afternoon and got the job at 7 p.m., had fittings at 9 p.m., and started on the set at 6 a.m. the next morning. It was pretty quick. But I was thrilled I got that job, because I really

enjoyed the story. It was very offbeat. The show was shot in studios in L.A. and an old theatre in Santa Monica. It's a period piece, set in 1900, with great costumes."

Her aptitude for humor was recently demonstrated in a British production titled *LEON THE PIG FARMER*. "It's a Jewish comedy," D'Abo smiles. "I had a lot of fun playing that part because my character, Madeleine, is completely out there and the writing is very funny. Leon, while coming back from the sperm bank, accidentally knocks her down. Madeleine is an artist who works in stained glass windows and specializes in scenes depicting the Crucifixion. When Leon announces that he is Jewish, she declares happily that her dad hates Jews and drags him off to bed. Later,

when he tells her he's not Jewish, she throws him out of the house. I'm a very narcissistic character, very vampish."

Mike Fergusson's London production of *THE BROWN VERSION* serves as D'Abo's latest assignment. The actress, in a cameo role, plays the ditzy wife of a boarding school instructor. "I flirt a little with Matthew Modine," she winks. "He has an affair with Grata Scacchi, who is married to Albert Finney. I'm a closet alcoholic. A lot of fun." She's currently preparing for an expanded, more sobering role as a woman who is *STALKED!* by an obsessed Jay Underwood.

Educated in three different countries, attending schools in Paris, Geneva and London, the actress claims a loss of geographical

identity. "I adapt to a lot of different situations, from glamorous to unglamorous. I'm a survivor, kind of worldly from having traveled so much. There is a side of me that doesn't know where home is. I miss England and feel at home when I'm there, but I've been so many places that I still have to find my roots."

She shares a house with her cousin, actress Olivia D'Abo who portrayed Karen Arnold on ABC's *WONDER YEARS* sitcom and earned some exposure of her own as the bikini-clad nymphet in *GREEDY*. The cousins share their house with two Labrador retrievers, Johnny and Sophie. "I'm not really very physical," D'Abo reveals candidly. "I try to stay healthy by doing exercises at home, and I go hiking with the dogs. But I smoke. I drink. I'm very European."

Maturing as an actress, D'Abo laments the deficiency of significant female roles. "The greatest fear for any actor is that great characters are disappearing, and it's all about action

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FERRATI



REBECCA



"I love face shots,"
andles the Playboy
model. "I'll always have
my body, but I won't
always have my face."
Perrelli recently followed
her role as GYBORG 3's
"stiletto cyborg vixen"
with her portrayal of a
prostitute and murder-
suspect in *VEGAS VICE*.

"I had some very steamy love scenes for the first time in my career, but under the condition that I'd be allowed to perform in them with my boyfriend."

nude?"). But she hates the one inquiry that routinely opens most interviews: "So, where are you from?"

OK, so I'm preparing for my *q&a* session with Rebecca Ferratti, the former cheerleader who graduated to *Playboy* Playmate, *American Gladiator* and tantalizing but tough-as-nails action heroine. I was determined to avoid the mundane questions, and open with an ice breaker: "If you and I were ever to go out, what would I have to do to qualify as the perfect date?" Not only would I throw Rebecca a curve ball as the introductory question, but—in the event she accepted my invitation to dinner—I'd adhere to her advice. Brilliant, huh?

Ferratti arrives at my office and I'm ready to pop the big question. But when I open my mouth, it suffers in translation. "Rebecca..." I hear myself ask the luscious lady, "What's your favorite sandwich?" It's embarrassing to be an idiot, but ten times even more embarrassing when you have to admit it in print. Just so it won't be a total waste, Ferratti's preferred sandwich is a salami and cheese on rye with mayo, heated up.

Searching for an alternate question, I fire off an equally profound inquiry: "So, where are you from?" The answer: Helena, Montana. Ferratti's family moved around a lot, but finally settled in Arizona. A cheerleader in high school, she dated the captain of the football team but also delegated authority as president of the *Futurs Farmers of America*.

After some modeling and commercials, Ferratti landed her SAG card and an

agent. Without too much pain and suffering, she successfully auditioned for the role of a waitress in *O.C. & STIGGS*. The film is something about the summer adventures of two kids. Seems deceptively Disney until you read the director's credit. Making her film debut, Ferratti was helmed by Robert Altman. Not bad for an aspirant actress working in Arizona.

Joyce Hyser played *JUST ONE OF THE GUYS* (1986), supported by newcomers Ferratti and Sherilyn Fenn. "This was the first of my many 'girlfriend' roles, where the main requirement is to walk around and look pretty," sighs Ferratti. "The challenge is to try to do something a little bit different each time, to make the character a little bit more interesting. I did get to dance a lot in this role, which was fine with me because nobody loves dancing more than I do."

Considered too sexy and exotic looking for pivotal roles, Ferratti moved to a lo-



"I loved him, he was so funny and easygoing that I referred to John Landis. The director of *THREE AMIGOS*, as John 'Boy' Landis."

cale where beauty is less of a liability. Arriving in Hollywood, she signed up for acting classes and was promptly cast in *THREE AMIGOS*. "Over the years," she smiles, "there have been three people who I wanted to work with, because they make me laugh so much: Martin Short, Pee Wee Herman and Jim Carrey. Getting a chance to play Martin Short's girlfriend was a dream for me, because he

was just as funny in real life as he is in the movies. The whole time we were on the set, I could not stop laughing. It didn't help that Chevy Chase was making farm animal noises all the time, even while we were shooting. That's because these guys just wouldn't stop being funny, and they actually made a hard on the rest of us to do our jobs right." While Ferratti earned the role through the obligatory audition, she later adds, "I heard the director, John Landis, liked my tan."

Bailing out of the "girlfriend" stereotype, Ferratti played Helena the Warrior in *OUTLAW OF GOR* (1987) and its sequel, *GOR* (1989). Based on John Norman's spear 'n' sandal fantasies, the movies were shot back to back. Stunt scenes, matching Ferratti with her body double, appear to be seamless. But, then again, there's a good reason. "They hired a stuntwoman to double for me," explains Ferratti, "but, early on, she was doing a horse-riding stunt and fell off. I kept telling the director that I wanted to do

"Jim Carrey proved, as *AGE VENTURA: RET DETECTIVE*, that he is the Jerry Lewis of the '90s. Our scene together had a great deal of improvisation."





"I'm glad that people like Julia Roberts have been able to make it big without taking clothes off. I want to be hired for talent—not because I'm a plaything."

the magazine swimsuit or modeling layouts. But it has been hard for me at times because I'm a religious person, and if I have had one skeleton in my closet, it would be my doing *Playboy*. I used to hide it for a long time, but now I just deal with it openly. If people are going to judge me for having been nude, as opposed to who I am, then I guess that's their problem."

As a result of her exposure in the magazine, Ferratti earned a minor role in *BEVERLY HILLS COP II*. She's visible as one of a throng of bikini-clad women, playing volleyball at the Playboy Mansion as Eddie Murphy makes his entrance. "This wasn't much of a role, I just wanted the credit. It did lead to more work with Eddie in some of his music videos, which was a big plus."

Ferratti's screen time substantially expanded in *CHEERLEADER CAMP* (1987). Produced under the title *BLOODY POM POMS*, the film was released when sleazier films were an expiring trend. The premise: a cheerleading squad is slaughtered by the team

mascot. Co-starring with Betsy Russell (*FF 2-2*) and Teri Weigel, Ferratti was introduced to a unique mode of method acting. "We were shooting my big emotional scene, where I cry at finding my best friend's body after she had been horribly killed. I didn't want to sit there, next to this maimed body, so the cameraman drew a smiley face on his hand and held it up to me and that's what I reacted to during the whole scene."

Cast as a murderous biochemist, Ferratti stalked Linda Blair and Sam Jones in *SILENT ASSASSIN* (1988). "In my death scene," she smiles, "I was hooked up with electrically charged aquas which create the gunshot wounds. But Sam fired his gun too early and, instead of being hit in the back like I wanted, I took the shot in the chest and it stung big time. It's not easy getting killed for a living."

HOW I GOT INTO COLLEGE (1989) proved less hazardous, with Ferratti appearing as a gains show model opposite *NEWLYWED GAME* veteran, Bob Eubanks. "Bob was great to work with," she grins. "He's

"I have a photographic affection for cotton sheets. I love to be wrapped in them."

my own stunts because I can ride horses, and knew martial arts, and generally like being an active performer as opposed to a passive one. Eventually, he complied and just about everything you see in the film is really me."

After wrapping the *GOR* movies, Ferratti was approached by *Playboy* magazine to show more than her athletic ability. "I was a centerfold in the magazine," she notes, "but I didn't do any bed layouts. I was an Indian in a sand dune, and a lot of pictures were of me in the nude while riding a horse. It was hard at first, I kind of lowered my shirt a

bit and the photographer said to me, 'What do you think this is, *House and Garden*?' So I cried for a little while, then I looked around, and there was no one out there, and I just decided to go for it. And after that, it was all pretty easy." Given the opportunity, would she do it all over again? "Don't get me wrong, the magazine has been very good to me over the years. They have always included me in events at the Playboy Mansion, which are more family-oriented than—as everyone seems to think—decadent. And I do a lot of charity work through the company, and still appear in

"Teasing in South Africa, during production of *GOR*. This is a candid snapshot of myself, my stand-in named Doreen, and Oliver Reed. I did all my own stunts."



really professional, a very handsome older man, and hilarious. I really like men with a good sense of humor."

1991's **SMALL KILL** was considerably more grim, with Gary Burghoff (**M*A*S*H**) cast against type as the film's transgressor. Portraying a young mother, Ferratti adapted to the movie's New York locations. "They usually put you up in a pretty nice place and you have decent food," she explains, "but I'm not very picky. I don't like a fuss to be made over me, so even if it's a Motel 6, that's fine."

After wrapping the film, Ferratti auditioned to become one of TV's **AMERICAN GLADIATORS**. "Three hundred and sixty-eight women tried out for three jobs, and I was one of the three," she says. "I love to be physical and competitive, and I have always been a very good athlete. Even though I'm small, I usually knocked the female contestants around pretty well. I was always considered a tomboy growing up, and I've retained strong fighting skills." No argument from me. When Ferratti entered my office, she noticed a Nerf hoop fastened to the wall. Without even warming up, she proceeded to sink 7 out of 10 foul shots.

Last year, Ferratti flew to Miami for a two-day stint on **ACE VENTURA: PET DETECTIVE**. "I shot two scenes with Jim Carrey," she beams. "—one for the theatrical release and the other for television. Jim rescues my dog and brings him to me. We exchange a few lines and then, in the scene version, I attack him by throwing him against a wall, kissing his whole face—making sure to leave lipstick all over it—and then pushing him onto my bed. The great part of the scene for me was all the improvisation between us. Jim, the youngest actor I've performed with, really made the week enjoyable and interesting. In the past, I've gotten that from more ma-



"My looks have certainly helped me get roles but they have also hindered me somewhat, because it's hard to be taken seriously as an actress. I'd love to do a movie where people don't look at me for my body, but rather how I can play a lawyer or mother."



"I want to move away from violence and exploitation films, and do films with a message about love, life, sincerity, romance and pain."

"My part came down to being a violent 'cyborg vixen' and pleasure unit. I objected to certain things that my character was required to say and do but, in the end, things were compromised and everyone was pretty much content. The make-up was probably the toughest part, at least four hours a day. But it was great being that huge gun around, and shooting up all the villains. I love that."

VEGAS VICE, her latest film, reunited Ferratti with SILENT ASSASSIN leading man, Sam Jones. Co-starring with steam queen Shannon Tweed, Ferratti plays a prostitute who turns into a prime suspect when her clients are wasted. "I wanted this part because it intrigued me to play a call girl," she says, "—to add class to the character, yet still do the sexy scenes things expected of a woman in that profession. I had some very steamy love scenes for the first time in my career, but it was under the condition that I be allowed to perform in them with my boyfriend. I believe

the scenes came out really well, because I was working with someone I really care about and am in love with.

"I've turned down small parts in big movies that required nudity, just because I didn't think there was any reason for it other than exploitation. I really can't do something that I feel cheapens me as a person. In VEGAS VICE, I had to wear a red wig for my part and all the guys said, 'Oh, you look great in that, you should leave it on.' But that really just made me feel like a piece of meat. Women don't usually ask men to make changes in their appearance in some way, but men love that with women—like with the wig. I've never understood that."

Have her nude scenes ever fueled a family feud? "My parents accepted it, but only after a while. They think I'm crazy for being an actress but they're proud of me, at the same time, for doing it on my own. After I did *Playboy*, my dad—a career military man—said to me, 'At least it wasn't *Penthouse*.'"

Unlike actresses who prefer to camouflage their personal lives, Ferratti is quite candid about her status as an unwed mother who—during the past five years—has raised her two sons. She's equally outspoken—in fact, quite livid—about "untalented starlets" who allow themselves to be exploited on- and off-screen. "I think they suck, they give people like me a bad name, and I'm glad that people like Julia Roberts have been able to make it big without taking their clothes off. If someone is going to hire me, they're going to hire me for my talent—not because I'm some

"This was shot five minutes before sundown. My best work is spontaneous."

ture actors like Richard Lynch, who would bring something special to his character, making the interaction with my character so much better. I can also learn from actors, because they are usually willing to pass this knowledge of the craft onto younger people."

Ferratti is confident the movie, which has grossed \$60 million, will further increase her familiarity with the public. "It's been nice that a lot of people have recognized me from *ACE VENTURA*. Before the movie, maybe it would happen two or three times a week. But this last month it's just been a lot more often. It's good professionally, too. Recently, I got a call from David Keith [*AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN*] about some potential projects after he had seen me in *ACE VENTURA*."

The actress recently completed *CYBORG 3*, a science fiction thriller that combines stunts and pyrotechnics with a very eclectic cast (Zach Galligan, Malcolm

McDowell, Krystyne Haje and Richard Lynch). Haje, crossing into movies after her *HEAD OF THE CLASS* sitcom didn't make the grade for renewal, plays the first pregnant ryborg. Seeking a doctor, she is assisted by Ferratti's cyborg hodyguard. "I told the director, Michael Schroeder, that I wanted the biggest gun they had, and they gave me an M-16," explains Ferratti.

"Between takes of a horror film called *GREENLEADER CAMP*, I posed my co-players—former teen idol Lefty Garrett and a *Playboy* Playmate—for a snapshot."





"What you see is what you get, but what you don't see is better yet," the actress shyly grins. Parvati's family has finally accepted her occasional nudity. "They think I'm crazy for being an actress, but they're proud of me for doing it on my own."



kind of plaything. I think that a lot of girls need to go back home and really figure out what they want to do, and discover family values and then come back and really study acting seriously, if that's what they decide on. It's a shame for me to see what these girls will do on—and off—the camera."

And what's in the future for a self-assured actress who snubs the Hollywood party circuit? "I feel that I'm getting better as I get older," insists Ferratti. "I'm constantly learning and maturing and I take care of myself, so I really believe that I can keep my figure for many years to come. My looks have certainly helped me get roles but they have also hindered me somewhat, because it's hard to be taken seriously for what I can do as an actress. I'd love to do a movie where people don't look at me for my body, but rather how I can play a lawyer or a teacher or a mother. It's difficult to compete sometimes when someone like Maria Conchita Alonso, who has a name, is willing to take off her clothes. She'll get a lot of offers."

"I'll probably be 40, looking thirtyish, before people take me seriously. I'd want to move away from violence and exploitation films, and do films with a message about love, life, sincerity, romance and pain. I think everyone should experience other people's pain to learn something from it. Basically, I hate Hollywood and the Hollywood scene, but the fact is that beautiful films come out of Hollywood and I would like to be a part of some of these films."

Alright, you perused her pictures and you've read her story. Maybe you can understand why I'm smitten with Rebecca Ferratti; hey, my money says you're sweet on her, too. Anyway, one thing's for certain...her beauty, brains, and *rapparti* with a Nerf hoop squarely deploy Ferratti into a league of her own. □

Update: Ferratti finally agreed to join interviewer Gary Garfield for a movie date. "We went to see Brandon Lee's movie, *THE CROW*," sighed Garfield. "I hired Rebecca to the screening by telling her that I loved karate...and four other Japanese words."



"I was 3 1/2 months pregnant when this was shot. I worried about these huge breasts [Are I already too much?]."
Top right: "It's me and **THREE AMIGOS**: Chevy Chase, Steve Martin and Martin Short." Right: With Jack Palance on **DOGS** Johannesburg location.



Fanny Fatales' own associate editor Debbie Reuben as Sam, a post-holocaust heroine, redefining parameters for B-film subgenres. "I will choose to work less than take risks for the sake of being in a movie," said Debbie.

R GUTS and Glamour ROCHON

The Feminist Fatale

ROUND #1: SHE SURVIVED A PERSONAL CRISIS. IN ROUND #2, SHE COMES OUT SWINGING AT B-MOVIE STEREOTYPES & SEXISM.

BY MATTHEW JASON WALSH

Once you're initiated into the film business, particularly the no-holds-barred world of B-movies, those wonderful blinders—which sustained your allegiance as a fan—are removed. The resultant vision is not pretty. I grew up cutting my teeth on the classics (HALLOWEEN, EVIL DEAD, et al.). By the time I actively engaged in the business, the genre had lost its provocation and kinetic drive. Once a launching pad for auteurs like Sam Raimi and Stuart Gordon, the market shifted into the realm of PUPPETMASTER, DEAD DUDES IN THE HOUSE and fill-in the New Line Cinema horror franchise of your choice—PART VI.

The individuality that rocketed so many filmmakers to notoriety in the '70s and early '80s has evaporated, replaced by one very simple and frightening assumption: the public will swallow anything as long as there's a profusion of blood and breasts on the plate. The industry has mutated into a joyless,



"This guy is no stranger to the B-film business," says Rochon. "Bad judgment calls have beckoned him to jail plays on 'censors.' I won't be on the critical list."

soulless machine, stamping out carbon copy after carbon copy of the latest trend. Example: The initial spate of low-budget erotic thrillers begot the cloning of derivative low-budget erotic thrillers (with cloned casts and plots). Creative decisions are now marketing decisions. More time, expense and "ingenuity" are invested in the design of a video sleeve than the film it promotes.

This blitzkrieg of commercialism is reflected in film conventions that supposedly celebrate the B-Cinema. These homages have turned into flea markets, contrived for extracting as much money as possible from the dwindling number of devotees. Declared dead, buried beneath the clutter of Jason and Freddy merchandising, is the cultural and creative mebe of the B-movie, and, unearthed for public view, are the remains of its brief and misguided incarnation (Born: 1987-Dead: 1990), identified by convention coroners as "acclaim queens."

Decades ago, B-movie actresses (Allison Hayes, Beverly Garland) were acknowledged for their chutz-

pah; roles, ranging from gun molls to gunslingers, stressed a defiance of stereotypes. But, reduced to body bags during another generation's alasher syndrome, B-starlets—a.k.a. scream queens—have been revered solely for nudity, shower scenes, and victimization: to be innocent, vulnerable. To qualify as a "scream queen," a movie career is irrelevant. Applicants are required only to attend conventions, adhere to the scream queen dress code (skinky lingerie), offer the sale of nude photos (prices are gauged by the amount of skin revealed, with a full frontal nude earning the maximum rate), and overcharge for a personalized Polaroid photo.

Deiouring past this fray is actress/writer Debbie Rochon, who is a contradiction of this trend. Rochon is a throwback to the '60s, when talent was every bit as critical as appearance. Fervently devoted to her craft, Rochon's esthetic aspirations are tempered with a healthy dose of self-respect. She's more familiar with the likes of Dee Wallace Stone and Claire Bloom than scream queens, and genuinely finds

"The women who are along for the P.R. ride will find themselves out of work, and replaced by the next generation of T&A queens. But talent will always endure."



"Last year, I was cast in off-Broadway's *LE MISEANTHROPE IMPROMPTU* just. Stage provides you with the discipline that's required for quality filmmaking."

more gratification in a well-written stage play than a derogatory role in a grade-Z exploitation flick. While other screen petitioners indulge in the glitter of backyard Camcorder epics and nude screen tests, Rochon very voluntarily shrugs off the mantle of scream queen. She doesn't need it. Her rebellion against the B-movie decrees notwithstanding, the stage actress has carved out a very respectable career as the associate editor of *Femme Fatales*. In case you haven't already noticed, she's the feminine (i.e. feminist) conscience behind the magazine.

My original intention with this article was to examine the rise and demise of the scream queen mystique by questioning one of its most eloquent meditators. To my surprise, I wound up with the story of a survivor.

Debbie Rochon grew up in a less-than-desirable household in Haney B.C., Canada. Amid the cold isolation of her family, she drifted into imaginary

worlds. Rochon later realized the freedom to communicate disparate identities and environments could be a cathartic experience on stage. "Even when I was five or six years old, I always told people that I wanted to be an actress," she reminisces. "My mother would say, 'Tell Mrs. Read what you want to be when you get older...' and I would blush, hide my face, and say, 'An actress!' The first acting job I ever had was with Paramount in *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: THE FABULOUS STAINS!* at age 12. It was a very small role that never made it into the final cut, but the six weeks I spent on the film left an impression. You could actually express yourself and be accepted... even praised! And I had so much to express."

The role became the turning point of her life. Prior to the film, Rochon fled from home and found herself wandering a world that invariably swallows up runaways. Without parental support or direction, she

bounded from the streets to nightmarish foster families to juvenile prison (her crime: stealing hubcaps). "Leaving home wasn't a problem for me," recalls Rochon. "I just threw a small box of stuff out of my bedroom window, and acted like I was going to school. Everything I experienced after that was worth the freedom I stole at age 12 going on 13. My dysfunctional family was sinking fast, and my soul couldn't watch any more of the desecration of the lives around me. Underground parking lots were far superior to sleep-in—being at home was too cold and lonely. Somewhere between the abandoned cars, I realized that if I was not to become a statistic, I had better join forces with something greater than myself. How would I know it was going to be Paramount?"

"Being on the set of *FABULOUS STAINS* taught me a few things. If you're SAG, you get a hot lunch. If you're non-SAG, you get a cold lunch—pizza! Seeing as it was a Paramount production, it was well financed, so I felt very well taken care of for the first time in my life. There wasn't a shortage of personalities on the set. It was a star-studded cast that hadn't yet filled their own shoes... Diane Lane, Christine Lahti, and Laura Dern. Dern was a very concentrated and studious young actress, but Lane was troubled and unhappy... and, consequently, moody. I was asked to shew around Peter

"In the opening of *ABDUCTED*, my only defense is a sense of humor."



On TV my verbiage act, with Joe Hyland, earned standing ovations."



Sellers' daughter, Victoria, for a couple of days while she was on the set. Everything was fine, until she decided that it would be fun to play an obsessed teenaged groupie similar to my character. So they let her. My big dramatic scene, in which I was to grab Diane Lane and offer my devotion, was immediately handed over to Ms. Sellers. To this day, I still believe I could have done it better. Abhh...show me!"

Saving enough money for drama lessons, Roehen moved to New York and was eventually cast in plays and minor roles in films. "My first acting role was in Leonard Melfi's one act play, *FERRYBOAT*. It was a two-character scene in which a guy is trying desperately to pick up a girl on the Staten Island ferry. I had only started taking acting classes so, luckily, I only had a few lines. My first real acting job in film was for genre director Robertia Findlay. I had just finished doing glorified extra work in a horror film titled *LURKERS*, and she rehired me for a role in her next film, *BANNED*. I wish I knew what happened to that movie. My character, a posser punk named Trish, had a frightening resemblance to yours truly when I lived in England. The work experience was very different from what I was used to. I got a crash course in film acting. All the experimenting I used to do in a six-week rehearsal period was

"Confronting an insensitive reviewer was, I find strength and kick his ass."



"As a kid, I was intrigued by *The Raven* and wanted to meet its author. Imagine my disappointment to learn he was dead!"

crammed into a couple of days and, in some cases, not even rehearsed before it was shot. I adapted."

Roehen gradually landed more work in low-budget features. Subsequent films increasingly expanded the depth of her characters and screen time, though she came to a professionally crucial decision. "I have never been desperate for a film role, though I am guilty of approaching the film business like the theatre. In the theatre, you do whatever is necessary to get the piece done. If that means you help out backstage, clean the bathrooms, or take tickets at the boxoffice, you do it. You soon realize what was once considered helping out is now frowned upon by film actors. In the beginning of my film career,

I took whatever role was offered me. Now that I see the stigma attached to careers that boast long lists of bad film titles, I realize that I should choose projects that I creatively agree with. And so, with a couple of mistakes in my closet, I will choose to work less than take roles for the sake of being in a movie."

Maintaining a sense of dignity and humor about her work, Roehen chooses a character more for ironic or idiosyncratic content rather than glamour. She appeared in a Troma promotional video as Edna Perlmutter, a frumpy, curler-crowned homemaker, only because it was a cosmetic challenge over pretty girl roles. "Most of my film work has been enjoyable," explains Roehen. "Whenever you put too

many personalities together, it's bound to erupt once in a while. The film business does have a tendency to attract neurotic people. I think a lot of us have a deep need to be something more than we are, and this longing for acceptance and importance drives us relentlessly at any cost. I always try to utilize my time. If I'm not preparing for my next scene, then I'm writing a production diary for *Femme Fatales*."

Her affection and curiosity for the film industry prompted Roehen to turn writer, a vocation that compatibly coexists with her movie career. Stylistically, Roehen has developed a first-person nuance to her interviews and articles about B-movie personalities. She tends to stress the

forgotten faction of the industry—women, specifically “actresses who are sincere about abandoning stereotypes.” After freelancing for several French film magazines, Rochon graduated to associate editor (alternate title, “editrix”) for *Femme Fatales*, a job that consumes almost all of her time (when addressed with the question, “What do your friends and family think of your career?” she instantly replies, “What friends? What family?”). In spite of the time constraints and deadlines, Rochon claims that she “loves” the profession. “You really couldn’t find more talented people to work with than the *Femme Fatales* management and staff. They give me so much encouragement and support. I consider them my family. We’re starting to go bi-monthly, so things will get even hairier than they already are. I take time out to act, direct and try to catch up with my fan mail. That’s about it! I completely abstain from social activity, except when I meet up with the staff from *Scarlet Street* at the Chiller Theatre conventions, then I drink and sing show tunes.”

Rochon’s research for the magazine has provided her with an all-too-clear percep-

“At 19, I turned blonde to join a rock group. But both, the blond and my new hair color, quickly dissolved.”



“I’ve seen the stigma attached to careers burdened with long lists of bad films. I’d prefer to work less, than accept roles in cheap, anti-female films.”



“Once the glamorous side is turned off, I devote my full time writing for *Femme Fatales*. Writing ensures my longevity in this business, it transcends age.”

tion on the professional casualties of cruising on sex appeal. “Scream queen has been a great handle for some actresses. Originally, there was a group of hard-working ladies that did a lot of films, and have been very successful in their own right. Now, however, industry people throw the title around like it’s some badge of insignificance or mediocrity, certainly a liability on the video market. If a woman has been an extra in a no-budget B- or Z-film, her next job will bill her as a scream queen just to get attention. They’ve managed to take an authentic title and turn it into a label for any seiforce chick who’s willing to be a clothes dispenser for a bit of P.R. I have to admit that I, too, have done my share of cheesecake shots. I endorse sensuality and freedom of expression, but let’s bring back a little class to our chosen profession. A little goes a long way!”

“I truly believe the scream queen era has ended. It has seen its heyday and, just like any other

trend, its future will consist of exploiting the past. What’s left after the water settles? Parasites, hoisting on the decayed and forgotten. The opportunities to sell yourself become all too attractive when you’re cast less and less often than you need to. Talent, however, will always endure. Some of the ladies I’ve met will become involved with another aspect of the business and do just fine. The women who are just along for the P.R. ride will find themselves out of work, and replaced by the next generation of T&A queens.”

To this end, Rochon is trying to shift *FF*’s focus from pin-up pulchritude to a forum on women crashing Hollywood’s boy’s club. Vivian Schilling, actress and Saturn Award-winning writer, is confident that Rochon will succeed in her ambition: “Debbie is a very positive force, impassioned about the roles of woman behind—and in front of—the camera. She’s not afraid to speak out for what she believes in. I think she’ll be

introducing new insights to *Femme Fatales*, regarding the way people view women as writers, directors and serious actresses.”

As I stated before, this is the story of a survivor. Debbie Rochon not only escaped a crippling childhood, but circumvented the exploitation route; she has chosen to cling to the virtues and ideals that attracted her to the business in the first place. “My goal,” smiles Rochon, “is to be a great writer and a wonderful actress. If it’s possible to do that in the B-world, fine. But I want more. I would love to work in the big leagues, and be with great actors and visionary directors and breathtaking budgets I’ve already been poor. I’m ready for room service!”

Postscript (April 1994): Mission accomplished. Rochon’s insistence on strength over exploitation earned her a starring role in *ABDUCTED II: THE REUNION*. No nudity, no peepshow cutaways, no compromise. While the camera was rolling on the \$700,000 production, she portrayed a city slicker who adapts to a bacolic existence—and wages war against a backwoods brute who tries to literally own women. Between takes, Rochon worked on her production diary (scheduled for publication next issue).

Rochon has been searching through more scripts that deliver the requisite “women of substance,” and preparing *FF* articles “that won’t be served up as mind candy... sometimes, the taste will be quite bitter.” And Rochon has two more objectives. First, she wants to direct a movie (“Go ahead—name five American female directors who are active.”) Second, she’s seeking one specific role. “Without question, it’s the lead character in Richard Matheson’s novel, *I Am Legend*,” exclaims Rochon. “It’s about the only human survivor in a world that has turned to vampirism. No bokey sex scenes, no camp, no gore, no b.a.—it’s a bril-



Looking neurotic for the trailer of 1982's **DO YOU LIKE WOMEN?** Before rubbing elbows with writer/actress Vivien Schilling. Below right: Meet Jonathan Zerkow, the part-time waiter, blacksmith and cop who co-designed Heston's Sam costume.

liant study of one person versus everyone else. The book was adapted twice to film, as a Vincent Price movie, **THE LAST MAN ON EARTH** and a one-dimensional shoot 'em up with Charlton Heston as **THE OMEGA MAN**. But I'd like to do a definitive but genre-bending version; you see, the book's leading character is a man. Something has to be done about that." Thirty seconds later, Rechon flips through her Rolodex and dials the phone. "Hello, is this Richard Matheson? My name is Debbie Rechon. I got your number through Cinefantastique. Listen, I have a suggestion. ."



TEMPTRESS

WHAT DO LOVECRAFT, ABBOTT & COSTELLO AND GUMBY HAVE IN COMMON? ASK JIM WYNORSKI.

BY ARI BASS



The players: Julie Strain, Linda Blair, Rochelle Swanson, Kristi Ducati, Larry Poindexter, Edward Albert, Michael Parks, Toni Negles and Antonia Dorian. The film, TEMPTRESS, a supernatural erotic thriller, formerly HAUNTER OF THE DARK. The director, Jim Wynorski, invited me to the set, unaware that I secretly intended to expose the unwashed underbelly of low-budget filmmaking.

As I arrive at the house in eastern Hollywood, the location selected for TEMPTRESS, Wynorski greets me with breakfast in hand. "You picked a good day to come out," he grins. "We're shooting lots of nudity today. The kind you'll like." "Is there really any bad kind?" I ask. "Yeah," replies Wynorski, "make nudity."

Seated on the front porch are Ms. Ducati, a veteran of two BIKINI CARWASH movies, and Lenny Juliano who has known the director for 15 years. Both actresses are awaiting the call for their next scene. Juliano brandishes a black eye, an injury inflicted during the previous day's shooting when he collided into a sauna. In between Robert DeNiro impersonations, he plies Ducati with film trivia.

"You know, there's all

kinds of Duhs in NOT OF THE EARTH," Juliano advises, referring to Wynorski's 1988 remake of the Roger Corman classic. "In the scene where Traci Lords drives up to the house, they used my car for the shot. But Traci couldn't drive a stick, I said, 'You can't drive a stick shift!' She says, 'Give me a break, I'm only 18.' So if you look closely at her rear view mirror, when she drives up, you can see two grips pushing the car up the street." Juliano pauses to look at his shivering co-star. "Why do you look so cold?" he asks. "Because I'm not wearing anything under this robe," Ducati replies behind chattering teeth. Ju-



Movie co-producer Todd Naples, "Michelle Serrano [Serrano], gave more to her character than the script demanded," Jake Strain, [Naples], was comfortable with her sexuality. Helmer Linda Blair, [Serrano], presented again, took out Edward Albert."

Juliano struggles to hide his tongue. Ducati soon lets it slip that a copy of *Playboy's Book of Lingerie*, featuring herself as a model, had been e-mailed in the kitchen-turned-office. "Is it in the kitchen now?" Juliano asks, slyly giving her the once over and jumping to his feet. "I've gotta go see that."

Juliano's chair now vacant, it looks like a perfect time for a *Femme Fatales* interview. But, as I sent myself, it's Ducati who fires the first question. "Is this considered a B-film?" she asks.

"It's a genre film."

"A genre film. I like that. Well, my character is very different from the characters I've played previously.





"Julie Strain, top, had no inhibitions about walking around naked on the set," says co-producer Todd Hagins. Below: Talk about crawling into bed with the co-producer! It's a dream sequence, Hagins (it is joined by Strain and Heather Swanson).



The character is the innocent, newlywed wife. She's apple-pie-America in a very twisted film. She's energetic and sweet and innocent and totally oblivious to everything that's going on in this film. My best friend Carol [Swanson] becomes possessed by a witch, and has a curse put on her. She turns against me, goes after my husband, and tries to kill me in the process. So, I'm kind of sucked into it."

Admitting her strong personality routinely draws dominant roles (it's the sort of typecasting that many actresses would savor), Duzati is pleased with the opportunity to be intimidated on film. "It's something different for me because I always play the real tough businesswoman, even in bikini movies. In this one I get to be the victim, and I'm glad

that people will see me do this as well. When I met Jim, he said, 'Oh, you're perfect for this.' I thought, 'What do you see that no one else sees?'

Fred Olen Ray, one of the film's producers, arrives on location and eagerly relates the project's genesis. "Jim came to me one day and asked, 'Do you have an H.P. Lovecraft script?'" I said, 'No.' He said, 'Okay, do you have a supernatural film of any kind?' I said, 'Yes, I have a script written by Mark McGee called *THE GYNSKA*, which is a little medallion they wear in the film. Mark is the guy who wrote *INNER SANCTUM* and *POSSESSED BY THE NIGHT*. Jim liked the script and made a deal with Mark. He changed the title to *HAUNTER OF THE DARK* because, at the time, there was a distributor who wanted a Lovecraft film. That deal fell through, but the title stuck. It has nothing to do with Lovecraft, it's about as far from Lovecraft as you can possibly get."

Securing private financing, Wynorski and Toni Naples asked Ray if he would produce the movie for them. "I think I've put together a pretty good cast," says Ray. "It's a short-schedule film but there's some money behind it. It's a fine show for what it is, sort of erotic horror."

TEMPTRESS is a close cousin to Ray's *POSSESSED BY THE NIGHT*. "In the erotic thriller genre, my biggest complaint was that people were always baying these wild sex scenes which were so unlike real life," explains Ray, shattering yet another illusion. "I said, 'This is so unreal, nothing like this ever really happens. The only way something like this would happen was making people do things that they would never do.' So, in *POSSESSED BY THE NIGHT*, I came up with the idea of them being influenced by this thing in a jar, a sideshow attraction that they found in an antique

"I think the erotic thriller of this sort will be gone in a year. This is how it is when a trend starts dying; you combine Abbott and Costello with Frankenstein."



"Linda Blair worked five days on *TEMPTRESS*," reports Toni Naples. "She was funny, good-colored... the cast and crew loved her."

store. I think Mark may have adapted that idea a little bit here."

Ray describes *TEMPTRESS* as a blend of Edgar Allan Poe's "Morella" and Fritz Leiber's *Conjure Wife*, the latter previously adapted for 1962's *BURN, WITCH, BURN* and 1981's *WITCHES BREW*, "inasmuch as the wives are involved with witchcraft, trying to promote their husbands' careers without their knowledge, to disastrous ends. One of the wives dies, but she continues to possess the house so that the next girl who comes along, the little blonde thing from next door, starts behaving like her and starts becoming Morella, if you will."

Despite appearances, Ray resists the notion that he's at the forefront of the latest vogue—combining an erotic thriller with other lurid genre elements. "I tried that last year with *POSSESSED BY THE NIGHT* and *INNER SANCTUM II*, which were basically horror films with erotic themes in them. It's just a way to keep it interesting for me and still produce the distributors I want. I think the erotic thriller of this sort will be gone in a year. What's coming up is non-violent, non-threatening erotic films. I think people are getting sick of seeing sex and death so closely linked. I like the supernatural and horror elements, though.

They really beef things up. But I don't think this is a new trend, I think this is how it is when the trends start dying out; you start combining Abbott and Costello with Frankenstein. That's what is happening today." If there's any doubt that violent films are on the endangered species list, Wynorski hammers another nail into the coffin, regarding the movie's title alteration from *HAUNTER OF THE DARK* to *TEMPTRESS*, he crisply comments "Horror films aren't selling at the American Film Market, so why give it a title with a horror implication?"

In spite of the dizzying two-week shoot, actress/co-producer Toni Naples doesn't look even remotely as frazzled as she claims to be. "It's tough to shoot on such a tight schedule, and Jim



does a hell of a job. There are maybe four directors in town who could pull this off."

"I take it the other three are busy?"

"No, but Jim had this script and he said, 'Toni, you should read this.' I thought it was kind of cool because we could do a lot of weird stuff with it. Fred said, 'As long as we keep our overhead down, we will make money...so let's do it.'"

"During the two weeks of casting, everything changed daily," recalls Naples. "We started out with Andrew Stevens, and then he decided he didn't want to do any of the love scenes. So he took a secondary role, and then later decided he didn't

want to do it all. We ended up recasting everything because we had cast the three female leads to work with a certain actor, who was a real good friend of Jim's. I wasn't particularly happy with him, because he was 20 pounds overweight and he had to do tons of nudity. At the last minute, the deal fell through and we needed a name. So we decided the role of Amelia, which I was going to take, should be a name. But now there's a problem because Amelia only works three days, and a star wants a more important role." The filmmakers considered Sally Kirkland, who was out of the country, and finally settled on Linda Blair. Some of Blair's lines had to be changed because she seemed too young to portray the character. "She worked out great," reports Naples. "Who would suspect her of being a witch? She's the girl-next-door."

Reminded that his female cast are conspicuously brunettes, Wynorski explains, "There's a reason. It's about witches, and I've never seen a blonde witch." But Naples expressed "con-

"The guy that invented Gumby hated actors. I hate actors, too. With Gumby you don't have to feed him...and if you get sick of him, you can just squash him."



"This is Rochelle Swanson and Kristi Ducret," explains Toni Naples. "Rochelle starts out blonde but, under Julie Strain's spell, later dyes her hair to brunette."

cern that we were going to end up with all brunettes. Jim said, 'Well, they are supposed to be Spanish, except for Carol. I was originally Maria Sanchez, and I don't look Mexican-Indian. So, at first, we changed her name to an Italian. But Italians just don't do voodoo [laughs], so then we made her Spanish.'"

The role of Maria is a bit of a departure for Naples: "For Jim, I usually play the cop or the bad guy. I asked for 'Maria' originally, but Jim said, 'You don't look like a housekeeper' [laughs]. Fine, okay. The fact is, throughout the film she is someone who actually sees what is going on, and trying to convince everybody else that there's a real threat. She's trying to help. The other girls believe in what they do, regardless of the consequences. I'm the one who has taught them all this stuff, so I'm aware of what can happen to them and I realize that they're getting out of control. It's

fun being the good guy in a weird way."

The current location offers a very comfortable environment for the script's premise. "The women who live in this house actually believe in witchcraft, and a lot of them are lesbians," reveals Naples. "It was amazing, we walked in and didn't have to do any set design. They all had these artifacts to the devil already here. They're great people, really." Suddenly, I'm really nervous that one of the women might have caught Lenny Juliano staring his wad of gum under the coffee table.

Meanwhile it's the daily ritual on a Wynorski set; the crew is having a ball. As the grips carry equipment around the set, they chant the dargelike "March of the Winkies" from THE WIZARD OF OZ. "None of us would be doing this if it wasn't fun to do," says Scott Jensen, the key grip. His quips fill the air every minute of the production.

Example: Setting up the next shot, the cinematographer, Gary Graver, asks Wynorski, "How tight do you want it?" Jensen inter-venes with, "That's a very personal question."

TEMPRESS marks the second time that Graver, an Orson Welles protégé, has shot a picture for Wynorski. "The first time was on DINOSAUR ISLAND [FF 2.2], which Jim co-directed with Fred Olen Ray. Jim's a great guy. He wants quiet on the set and no one gives it to him. He's very verbal, but he's right. He does a lot of rehearsal, he works with the actors. We're getting good staff. The actors are good, the girls are beautiful, and I'm happy with it."

Wynorski jokes that leading man Larry Poindexter is "the reason why Gumby was invented, right there. You know the guy that invented Gumby hated actors. I hate actors, too. With Gumby there's no waiting for him to get done in makeup, he's always ready, no wardrobe, you don't have to feed him, no per-diems... and if you get sick of him, you can just squash him."

Later that afternoon, after Poindexter fishes a line during a had scene with Swanson, a crew member reminds him, "Gumby's waiting outside." "That's right," adds Wynorski, "he's ready. He's got his hoxer shorts on." Wynorski turns to me and says, "I hope you're getting some of this down."

It seems that Wynorski, who billed himself as Arch Stanton on a couple of pictures (HARD TO DIE and SORORITY HOUSE MASSACRE 2), has yet to exercise his penchant for gratuitous THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY in-jokes. This time around, a TV news reporter (played by Fred Olen Ray) is named Bill Carson, homage to the man whose treasure is sought out by Sergio Leone's title characters. "I just love that film, I can't help it," laughs

"Rochelle Swanson," says Naples, "made some movies with Andrew Stevens. Wynorski liked her work."



Wynorski.

The filmmakers have made a conscious effort to avoid over-the-top, slasher-style carnage because, relates Naples, "It doesn't do too well in the foreign market. So we're using more sex than violence." Wynorski & Co. agree that the film's selling point is the *menage-a-trois* lesbian dream sequence, scheduled for this evening's shoot, which will unite Naples, Julie Strain and Rochelle Swanson. The actresses' preparation for the scene appears to be one part body makeup and two parts wine. As she sips Chardonnay from a paper cup, I stroll over to the kitchen table and ask Julie Strain (FF 1.2) about her role. Wynorski, pacing nearby, answers for her: "She's the whole *crux* of the movie. Absolutely [snaps her fingers]. Quote me on that."

Strain is definitely a dominating screen presence. Fresh from featured roles in *NAKED GUN 3 1/3*, *BEVERLY HILLS COP 3* and Drew Sidaris' *THE DALLAS CONNECTION*, Strain stars as Pomdexter's wife, Erica. "My character's very involved in witchcraft and, actually, gets killed in the first bag scene of the movie," Strain reveals. "She then goes throughout the rest of the movie haunting Larry, entering people's dreams, and creating situations such as a three-way all-girl love fest, or whatever you want to call it. It's a lot of fun, and it's nice to run into a lot of the same crewmembers—there's two people from *UNNABABLE II* here" (Strain played the title character in the aforementioned movie).

Rochelle Swanson plays Carol, the innocent young thing who is possessed by Strain after she fastens on the Gynska. The actress has already rubbed elbows with Rachel Welch (*TAINTED BLOOD*), Rosanna Arquette (*IN THE DEEP*), and Michelle Phillips (*RUBDOWN*). In a scene where she is called upon to



"My character's really been I out of context with the story," says Toni Naples

"My scenes were complete fantasies"

careen herself during a possession-induced dream, Swanson seems more challenged than embarrassed by Wynorski's direction: "Give me a lot of orgasmic ooohs and aahs. Arch your back and push the boobs out." It's all over in one take, and Swanson laughs before retiring to the make-up room with some wine.

As night falls, the time

arrives for the Strain-Naples-Swanson triad, and the director clears the set ("Everybody, get the bell out.") Between the lights and chugging smoke machine, the room soon feels like a sauna. Every 15 minutes or so, crew members have to rush out to breathe some cool, fresh air. A few hours (!) of heavy petting and foot

licking later, it's all over: Strain leaves the bedroom set clad only in a G-string. "Do you need anything, Julie?" asks a crew member. "Not now," is her reply. How hot was the scene? Wynorski would only be quoted to the effect that he was "sufficiently excited." Once again, Jim Wynorski and Fred Olen Ray deliver the goods. □

BLONDE HEAVEN

ELLEN CABOT'S EROTIC SPOOF ADDS MORE FUEL TO THE RENEWAL OF A TREND: FEMALE VAMPIRES.

By GARY GARFINKEL

God created the Earth in seven days. Director Ellen Cabot couldn't quite match the Supreme Being's track record, but—working from 12 noon to 12 midnight—wrapped *BLONDE HEAVEN* in eight days. Most of the Full Moon Entertainment production was shot within studio interiors, only one day was reserved for location shooting on Hollywood Boulevard.

Three years ago, Cabot conceptualized the project as "a role reversal of *THE LOST BOYS*," with female vampires subbing for the 1987 hit's machismo blood-suckers. According to Cab-



"Michelle Bauer will strike revealing poses only if it amazes you," explains Gary Garfinkel. "We previously worked together on *BAMBO PENITENTARY*."

"Rashyn Sealman (below) did a steamy love scene with Julie Strain. Happily, they were friendly off the set."



ot, the "Lost Girls" idea was later developed "into a story originally called *DRESSED FOR DARK*. For a while, we had Brigitte Nielsen attached. The story was reworked many times and, eventually, Brigitte dropped out. We shopped the script all over the place and when Full Moon's Charlie Band saw it, he said, 'Let's do it.' We made some changes and, the next thing you know, we're in preproduction."

Cabot, no stranger to the softcore cinema with credits that include *BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND*,

claims that *BLONDE HEAVEN* "has eleven sex scenes in it, easily surpassing anything else that I've done. And that's in just 80 minutes!" I did a little mental arithmetic, calculating one sex scene every seven minutes. "You bet!" Cabot gleefully replied. "We deliver the meat and potatoes around here."

The film opens with Angie Summers, a youthful resident of Peachtree, Oklahoma, transplanting herself in Los Angeles. She seeks employment at *Blonde Heaven*, an escort service operated by a tribe of vam-

pires. Angie's boyfriend arrives on the scene, hoping his betrothed will make a U-turn back to Peachtree. The couple befriend Pluto, a projectionist and part-time vampire hunter, and eventually huddle with a host of recurrent Cabot players, including Michelle Bauer and Joe Esteves.

A newcomer to the Cabot repertory, Rashyn Sealman is making her film debut as Angie. "My first day, I had to do a love scene that left my knees black and blue," smiled Sealman, "because I had to straddle my co-star on a cement slab for an hour and a half. Then, the second day, I did a sexy scene with the lead vampire, Lilyana, who is played by Julie Strain. It's hard never having been on camera before, and starting right out on all those steamy scenes—but the only way I look at it is I, myself, wouldn't do those things but my character Angie would. And there were plenty of regular scenes for me to just learn about acting."

Sauntering her centerfold shape around the set, Julie Strain—about 6'1" barefoot—measures approximately 65" with her black boots and wild hair. Strain's exposed belly is so firm, you could play a game of handball off of it. She recently wrapped *TEMPTRESS* (see



separate article), portraying a lusty, bisexual spirit. Last year's Penthouse Pet of the Year describes BLONDE HEAVEN as "the first script I read that I really wanted the role. Illyana is the lead vampire at the escort service. One day, my assistant brings me this little blonde girl who is the reincarnation of my old lover, Vincent. Of course, I am totally smitten by her, and it is my sole ambition to get the chick in the end. I just couldn't picture anyone but me playing the part of this outrageous vampire, and I had heard rave reviews about Ellen as a director. I was totally psyched when I got the part, and it's been a great experience and a lot of fun."

Pegging Strain as one of the busiest actresses in town is hardly a hyperbolic description. She's already been cast in 35 films, and is scheduled to appear in 12 more films throughout the duration of 1994. One burning question: how does Strain feel about nudity? "It makes no difference to me," she replies, "whether I have my clothes on or off."

I talked to my idol, Michelle Bauer, about her role as Amanda Blackwell, whose beauty blinds the vampire hunter to her bloodlust. "My character is a famed actress who drives Pluto crazy," laughed Bauer. "He builds an Amanda Blackwell shrine and watches all of my movies."



Arising BLONDE HEAVEN's in-jokes: Michelle Bauer portrays a vampire who moonlights as a business

To film this, we used clips of my real life movies, NIGHTMARE SISTERS and SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIMEBALL BOWL-A-RAMA. Amanda is discovered to be a vampire herself and, naturally, she wants to give Pluto the eternal bite." After I turned off the recorder, I asked Bauer if she'd be willing to give me the eternal bite. "Sure," she shrugged, "—and afterwards, I'll come over and clean your entire apartment." Did I mention she was my idol? □

Garfield describes Julie Strain (top left & below) as "Wild!" suggested the coffee, left, for our photo shoot. She started straddling the dummy corpse!



SCORCHY

TWO HOT ACTRESSES DEBUT IN A THRILLER DESCRIBED AS "DEAD CALM IN THE DESERT."

BY GARY GARFINKEL



Gabrielle Byrne, posing with pistol gun, embellished her character with a sexual ambiguity that hints at an attraction for the hero and heroine.

Things literally heated up on the outdoor location of a nail-biter called *IGNITEMARE*. The grilling temperature, generated by the desert sun, was further stoked by a combination of combustibles, including conflagrations kindled by the effects crew and the blistering sex appeal of the film's female cast. A rainstorm halted production during one March afternoon, inviting a little time to relax and relate the scenario that fuels *IGNITEMARE*..

Three friends organize a camping trip. As they travel to the desert, we're introduced to fresh-faced nice girl Amy, her boyfriend Kevin and the lovely but eccentric Ricky. As they engage in "group dynamics," we learn more about the trio's intertwined relationships. Ricky, with her alternating heat for both Kevin and Amy, remains something of a mystery. Seeking recreation, the threesome load up their pellet guns and plunge into an intense game of hide and seek. Eventually, Amy and Kevin come across a pool of blood. Dismissing the carnage as one of Ricky's pranks, the couple takes a trail which lands them in the camp of Sam Burns, a charming desert rat whose name none-too-subtly reflects his indulgence for pyromania. In a perverse truncation of the Salem witch trials, Sam—drawing upon his turbulent past—ritualis-

tically burns a virgin per year. After learning the facts behind Ricky's fate, Kevin abruptly disappears. The film culminates with Amy and Sam declaring psychological warfare on each other.

Former MTV dancer Karen Fontaine makes her film debut as Amy. "This was a great role to play for several reasons," explains Fontaine. "I consider myself very fortunate to have started out with a character that is so multi-layered. During most of my struggles with Sam, I am bound, which means it becomes a psychological battle on my part. Amy is pretty much naive at first, and you watch her grow as she tries to figure out an escape from Sam's imprisonment."

"At first, I try to reason with him, and then I work



Former MTV dancer Karen Furlaire (above) relaxes on the sticky set of *IGBTISLAND*; (left) burning realism, one of the stunt men declined flame-resistant facial protection (below).





"I had to rush through my interview with Karen Furlina," noted writer Gary Garfinkel. "She had an assignment, as a swimsuit model, later that afternoon. Her **IGNITER** character is very complex. Starting off as emotionally naive, she gradually matures."

"I've realized this genre has become more blood and guts rather than the psychological terror of the old days. I wanted to return to the genre's roots."

for compassion by crying. When none of that brings out any response, I turn to my last resort—seduction. I found these changes in character to be the most challenging aspect of the role. The fact that a woman wrote and directed this movie was important to the performances. I hope my second time out, I get something that is equally satisfying to do."

After a series of auditions and callbacks, Gabrielle Beinfurde was finally cast as Ricky. "I wanted this part so badly, for so long, that it was getting to me," comments Beinfurde. "When I finally got the part, I immediately started panicking. It just hit me, and I was thinking that I can't actually do this. But I feel that I was just going through a normal series of emotions."

Though Beinfurde shares less of the film's running time than her co-stars, her character is the catalyst who further develops the relationship between Amy and Kevin. "My take on Ricky was as a woman with clearly defined feminine and masculine sides, who is unpredictable as to what she might do—or when," says Beinfurde. "It's usually entertaining when female characters are interested in other female characters, and I wanted to bring a little of that to this part. I am grateful to Catherine [Lane], the director, for letting me try new ideas with this role and I think, because of that, I was able to add some good things to Ricky." Beinfurde's next assignment is *JESSE JAMES* (no, it's not about the legendary outlaw, but a couple of brothers named "Jesse" and "James").

Catherine Lane admits she's loved horror films since childhood. "But lately," notes *IGNITEMARE*'s writer/director, "I've realized this genre has become more blood and guts rather than the psychological terror they favored in the old days. This kind of terror has always been more frightening to me and, with this project, I wanted to return to the roots of the genre. I had this idea germinating in my head for a while and, finally, I just sat down and wrote the script. I guess I was further along with it than I thought, because I wrote the whole thing in one weekend. It was fleshed out as we went along, but the majority of the shooting script was done that first weekend. After I had finished, it seemed that *IGNITEMARE* had kind of become a 'DEAD CALM in the desert.'" So far, so good. *DEAD CALM*, the 1989 sleeper charged by an erotic undercurrent, pitifully Billy Zane against wily Nicole Kidman.

"In terms of getting the picture made," continues Lane, "a big plus was that the psychological element lent itself to low-budget filmmaking, so we did not have to go looking for a huge amount of money. We found a great location near Barstow, California that had many different looks within a two-mile radius. We did a lot of rehearsals beforehand, which helped us to avoid last minute shuffles. Warren Stevens, who played Sam, was not available for these rehearsals but that was actually beneficial because, when we got to the set, the other actors were not as comfortable with him and that gave his scenes a real



The athletic Gabrielle Beinfurde suffered a huge bruise on the back of her thigh, the consequence of performing her own stunts for the movie.

edge, which was what we wanted."

In her debut as director, Lane was confident she was the woman for the job. "Even though I felt I could direct, and wanted to be the person to translate the script to film, that first day was very nerve-racking," recalls Lane. "It was absolutely on-the-job training, and a

job that required instant decision-making. I had an excellent cast and crew working together, which made the process easier."

The rain stops. Bidding adieu to the cast and crew, I head for the car. Behind me, someone shouts a phrase that may turn into the movie's tag line: "May all your *ignitemares* come true!" □



Denise Duff's film roles include a vampire in **SUBSPECIES II & III**, the sidekick in **PROGTOWN II**, and a K&A agent in **BLOODFIST V**. "That makes 12," quips Duff, underscoring her goal to "make a film with a title that is not followed by a Roman numeral."

DENISE DUFF

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from the sunlight. Would the actress return to that film's rustic locations? "I remember on the way home from Romania, it seemed like a dream already. I was eight hours away and it seemed like the past. I want to go back there. Saying goodbye was so hard because you're saying you're going to see everyone again, but it's not a place I would go on vacation. I know the only reason I'd go back is to do a film. So let's do **SUBSPECIES IV**! I'll keep this character going for another episode." □

MELANIE SHATNER

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nively as high in quality as a film could go for a low budget movie. Unfortunately, because of their limited funds, the pace was unbelievable. They would need to rewrite a big scene when you were on your mark, and go 'Action' before you've even rehearsed it

once. It would make me cry. 'Just give me five minutes to let me work this through.'"

Through her Dolphin's Day production company (an homage to her favorite film, **DAY OF THE DOLPHIN**), Shatner is actively developing children's movies. "I don't necessarily want to produce movies that I'm in," she explains. "I feel strongly about children's welfare. I think kids are neglected in our society and that a lot of what is out there is harmful to kids. Maybe I'm a hypocrite because I've done so many horror movies, but I would like to do these things for kids."

Rubbing the fatigue from her eyes, Shatner leans back in her chair. "I've grown up in this business," she says. "My father's office is a set, and I used to watch all day long. I've been really lucky because the people I've worked with have all been wonderful actors. I've really enjoyed my experiences so far." □

MARYAM D'ABO

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Roles for women are becoming few and far between, and are often one dimensional. The recession has made it worse and competition is greater.

"I think now, if I'm to get a pilot that might go to series, it has to have a character and a story I believe is good, something I can put my passion into. I've come to an age, now, where I can't do work just for work. You kind of lose it when you get older. You get more specific about what you want to do. It has to be a strong character, and well written." □

PHYLLIS DAVIS

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cause—to date—it commemorates Davis' last appearance in a feature-length movie.

Before we wrap the interview, Davis recalls another time that she deflected the fear by shielding herself behind a scripted character. "I remember one time on **FAN-**

TASY ISLAND, I had to play this person that was dating a married man and was madly in love with him. All of a sudden, I became the character and the next scene I meet the wife and she's in a wheelchair, and he had led to me all this time and now I feel like a whore. I was supposed to have on a red negligee, and I had a temper tantrum that I wasn't going to be a whore and be put in some red negligee. And they had to wrap me up, and put me in a long gown that you couldn't see through."

One more thing: She's perpetually played secretaries, from her Elvis ingenue days through her lucrative TV years. Ever feel typecast? "I don't know," she grins. "I've done more bookers than secretaries. On **FANTASY ISLAND** I'd get a lot of those roles. They said it was because I had a look so that, whatever I'd say or do, it would come off innocent. I have very innocent-looking eyes." □

ACTION FILM EMPRESS

A MAN'S WORLD? ARLENE SIDARIS TAKES AIM WITH BULLETS AND BOMBSHELLS.

PROFILE BY DEBBIE ROCHON

Even film addicts shrug their shoulders when asked to elaborate on the job description of "film producer." Typically stereotyped as a cigar-smoking penny pincher, the producer tries to fuel some enthusiasm for a story premise. In the event his concept could render some profits, it's sculpted into sales form. The producer subsequently supervises the script, makes sure it's tailored within the constraints of a certain budget, and then tackles everything from casting and scheduling to promotion and distribution. More significantly, he furnishes the director with everything necessary to insure the movie will be made. And—please note—I have twice attached "producer" with *he* and his pronouns.

Hollywood is a rough town for a woman in the film business; it's been a man's domain since the first foot of film was threaded through the camera. Would a woman's authority affect a movie's sales at the boxoffice? Why aren't women producing a larger body of work?

"There are so few female producers because it's really hard work," admits Arlene Sidaris. "You have to convince people that you're the right person to get the option, the right person to put their careers in the hands of." Sidaris speaks from experience. In 1977, she and Beverly Camhe launched their own production company, optioning the *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* properties for an ABC-TV series. Not had for a couple of William Morris secretaries who declined "average female" 9-to-5 jobs with two week vacations.

"Women have to cultivate leadership qualities," explains Sidaris. "Women haven't had the opportunity



Arlene Sidaris, producer. Her projects range from TV sleuths (NANCY DREW) to shoot 'em ups.

to be independents, to go to a bank and get funding for a project." The Sidaris/Camhe partnership also delivered *OBSESSED WITH A MARRIED WOMAN* (1985), a made-for-TV movie starring Jane Seymour. During this period, the woman who would later become *DR. QUINN, MEDICINE WOMAN* was exposed to Hollywood's double standards and prejudices. "It was hard for Jane to make the transition from her Bond movie [1973's *LIVE AND LET DIE*]. They treat their women like window dressing," notes Sidaris. "She was out of work for a long time after that, really struggling. Just because an actress has done one kind of part before, they want her to do it again. The categorizing people do is a sign of immaturity and laziness."

Sidarlis currently manages Malibu Bay Films with husband and in-house director, Andy Sidaris. *HARD TICKET TO HAWAII* (1987), which marked the first of their seven feature collaboration, proved professionally and emotionally challenging. "We didn't have a very close relationship in the first couple of films," reveals Sidaris. "At first, we argued a lot. It's been quite a trek from the sublime to the ridiculous, but we have a good working relationship now. Andy is the director, and I don't cross that line." Her work ethic is simple: get the job done in the most resourceful way possible. "You're either in or *en la way*," she succinctly states.

An afternoon's conversation with Sidaris enlightens one to her success. Problem solving is her forte. "Anybody who says something can't be done shouldn't be on a movie set," insists Sidaris with an L. B. Mayer-type grit-



Dona Speir and Julie Strain in Sidaris' *FIT TO KILL*. The tough persona reflects the producer's motto: "Women have to cultivate leadership qualities."

tiness. Malibu Bay has churned out action-adventure films and, in the process, carved out legitimate careers for ex-centerfolds Dona Speir, Hope Marie Carlton, Cynthia Brumhall and Roberto Vazquez (last year, one prominent French publication identified the all-female repertory as "Dossier: Femme Fatales." Hmmm). Along with the bikini, the Sidaris alliance has literally yielded more bang per buck, though subsidized on low budgets, each film is loaded with more detonations than a Road Runner cartoon. Though hard pressed to cite a female filmmaker who may have influenced her, Sidaris singles out the Master of Savings as an inspiration. "I admire Roger Corman for not going along with the crowd," says Sidaris. "He saw film as a real property, with merchandising and marketing done on his own terms. Being an independent filmmaker has two sides. The good news is you don't have to ask anyone for \$100. The bad news—it's your \$100."

Arlene and Andy Sidaris have passed the torch to son Drew, who now directs for Malibu Bay. The production slate include *ENEMY GOLD*, *DALLAS CONNECTION* and *DAY OF THE WARRIOR*. Will Drew Sidaris impact with the same entertainment value that his parents have sustained for nearly a decade? Pretty likely—they'll be his executive producers. □

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